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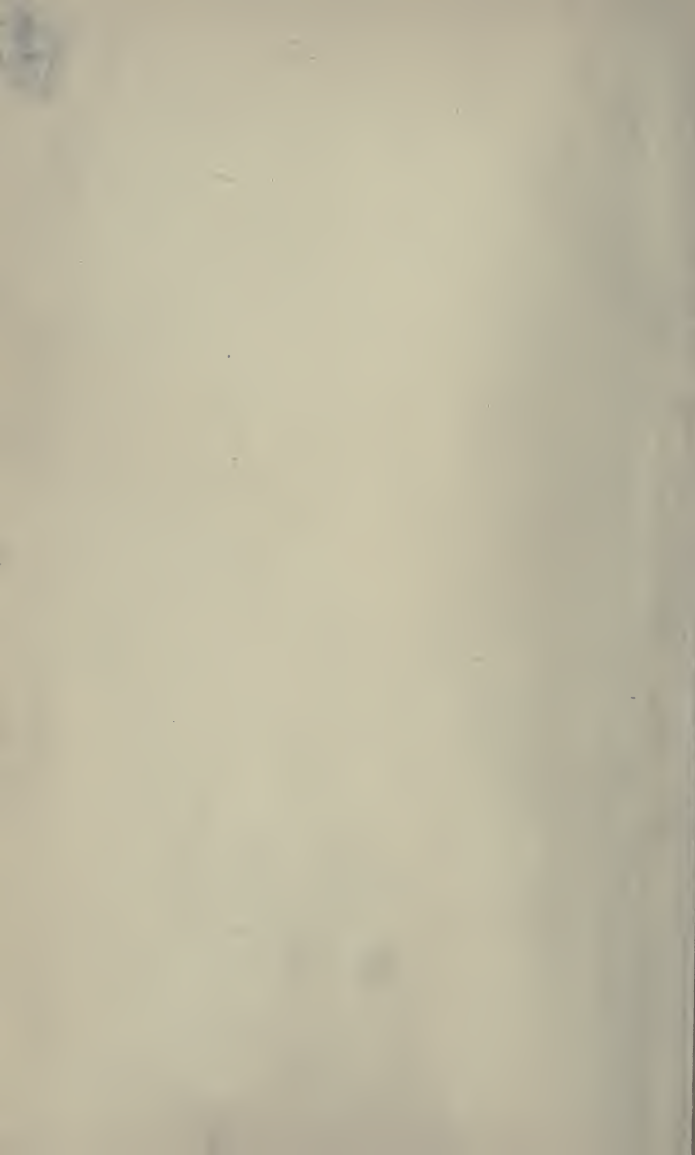
PARINE

REGINA

WALTER BESANT









n  
KATHARINE REGINA

BY

n  
WALTER BESANT

AUTHOR OF "ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN"  
ETC.



BRISTOL

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# KATHARINE REGINA.

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## CHAPTER I.

### "The Cup—"

ONE of the most delightful things that can possibly happen to an engaged couple, especially when they are just about to carry on that engagement to its legitimate end, is the acquisition, by gift or by inheritance, by chance or luck or windfall, of a house, a good house, in a good situation, solidly furnished—every young woman of judgment much prefers solidity to æsthetics. Unfortunately these windfalls occur too seldom: the rich cousin does not always die intestate, just when it would be most convenient: the long-lost and benevolent uncle does not always turn up at the right moment: the miserly guardian does not always, just when it would be most useful, prove to be an old man of the largest heart and the most unselfish generosity: and in these days of general depression nobody has anything to give away except farms which are no longer of any use. For these reasons most of us have to begin our married course with the suburban villa of unstable equilibrium and uncertain drains, and to furnish it as best we may, bit by bit, or on the three years' system.

Imagine then, if you can, the unbounded satisfac-

tion with which Katie received the intelligence that her lover's uncle—his Uncle Joseph, whom she had never seen, for whose decease she had not shed a single tear, and who was angry with Tom for not following his own profession—had actually bequeathed to him, absolutely, the whole of his estate, including, with all kinds of real and personal property, a beautiful great house completely furnished, in Russell Square, on the east side, where they have long gardens, and where the sun shines full upon the drawing-rooms in the afternoon. Besides the house there were lands and freeholds, railway shares, gas and water shares, shares in trams, money in funds, money on mortgage—why, there was enough, it was certain, to make up more than a thousand pounds a year. What happiness! More than a thousand pounds a year of additional income, to a couple who were going to marry on about five hundred! And a big house, solidly furnished, in Russell Square!

People turn up their aristocratic noses at Russell Square, but there are nowhere more comfortable houses, and there is nowhere a more central situation. A truly wonderful piece of good fortune! To be sure, Uncle Joseph had only two nephews, and therefore he might have been expected to leave something to Tom. But then Uncle Joseph had never expressed any intention of dying. And, again, Tom had offended him because he would become a journalist, and his uncle could not understand how any young man who respected himself could follow a profession in which there was no money to be made and no prizes to be won except the editorship of a paper. Now the other nephew, for his part, in order to please his uncle had become a solicitor and was now in practice. But then the world had never learned that this other nephew, who was never seen at his uncle's

house, by long-continued courses, having a fine, bold nature, free from the restraints of prejudice, had estranged his uncle far more than Tom. And now Tom had all, and the other—his name was James Hanaper Rolfe—had none.

Tom had all!

In thinking of this wonderful dispensation Katie was fain to sigh, so happy she was, and to say: "Poor, dear Uncle Joseph! To think, Tom, that he has now gone to a world where a word of gratitude will never reach him! And yet, what a fine, clear insight into character Uncle Joseph must have possessed to recognise the splendid abilities and the genius of his nephew—you, Tom. Poor, dear Un—cle Jo—seph!"

No one, certainly, ought to be judged merely by what men say of him. People had been accustomed to say hard things of Uncle Joseph. They called him miser and curmudgeon—I wonder how a man feels who knows that he is called a curmudgeon (curmudgeon, derived from *cur*, an inferior species of dog; and *mudgeon*, from the Anglo-Saxon *mudge*, the meaning of which I have forgotten). Does that man grind his teeth? Perhaps, dear reader, in spite of your benevolent heart, they call you a curmudgeon. Do you feel badly about it? People said, moreover, that Uncle Joseph was ill-tempered and bearish, because he had grown old and outlived his clients and had lost some of his money. That was what they said. And yet here he was, in the very noblest manner, forgiving Tom for going his own way, making a will entirely in his favour, and retiring to a better world just when his absence would produce the most beneficial result possible. Good, maligned Uncle Joseph!

Really, when one comes to think, it was a kind of happiness quite out of the common—a lot which

would incline one to believe in the favouritism of Fortune—but then Dame Fortune's gifts are always, like the Most Noble Order of the Garter, wholly unconnected with any of your confounded merit. As for Tom himself, he was twenty-seven, an age when one is still in the promising stage, but is certainly working steadily in the direction of his career: he was engaged to the sweetest girl in the world—he acknowledged that himself, so that it must be true; and other girls hadn't even a chance of disputing the assertion, because they did not know Katie, who was not, as you shall learn, in Society: he had a profession which he loved, and he cherished ambitions which made his heart glow whenever he thought of them: and now he was actually going to get a thousand pounds a year—with nothing to do for it—and a beautiful great house to live in! Pure favouritism, my brothers. He didn't deserve it at all. Katie did, no doubt, because she was so very sweet.

Think of the gratitude which one ought to feel for an uncle who has been so thoughtful as to acquire all this money for one! Who has gone on slowly and peacefully, giving his whole life to this single object, buying a substantial house, furnishing it solidly, so that the things would last a dozen generations; investing the money as it came in wisely and safely, and finally, without the least hint beforehand of any such intention, so as not to raise hopes or to create impatience, at the very nick of time, the exact moment when the act would be most graceful, most useful, and most deeply appreciated, to retire from business—Uncle Joseph's idea of life was inseparable from business—and as the American humourist feelingly says, “to send in his checks,” leaving everything to his nephew. I declare that the very thought of such a career, so unselfish, so disinterested. so



wholly devoted to amassing wealth for another to enjoy, fills me with humility as well as admiration. For my own part, I confess that I could never rise to such a level of pure unselfishness. Much as I love my own nephews, there is not one among them all for whose dear sake I should be contented to live the life of Uncle Joseph, to grub and to grab, to snatch and to save, to toil and to moil, to incur the reproaches of hardness and of meanness in order that he might afterwards sit down and fold his hands. No, I could not do it. Uncle Joseph will no doubt receive in another world the reward due to a life so unselfish, and to labour so altruistic.

"What have I done, Katie," asked Tom, "that my uncle should leave me all his money? He has another nephew. He never seemed particularly fond of me. He never forgave me for refusing to be articulated to him. I only saw him two or three times a year, and yet he gives it all to me and none to Jem at all."

"Tom," said Katie, "your uncle knew which of his family would make the best use of the fortune. You are going to be a great writer, and now you can work at your leisure and give the world your very best without being forced to dissipate your powers in drudgery and distasteful work."

And yet—and yet—there does seem a suspicion of favouritism about such a wonderful stroke of luck.

Consider the position with more attention to detail.

Tom Addison was, as we have said, seven and twenty, and at present a journalist. As a journalist he had not yet risen to the lofty level of the leader writer. But he was already known by the editor to have considerable descriptive power: he could "do" a crowd, and could seize the humours of

the mob and catch at passing character: he could talk about a boat-race or an athletic event as one who has knowledge—in fact, his own athletic record was by no means contemptible, and the silver cups which he possessed might have been pawned for a great sum. He had written verses and sketches and notes of travel for the magazines, and he had already published a novel. It was a lively work, full of cleverness and sparkle, and the papers all spoke well of it. But when the publisher's statement of account came in there appeared a loss of £86 15s. 10d., which Tom had to pay out of his own pocket, and this disastrous result prejudiced him for a time against the Art of Fiction. It seemed to be a desirable and attractive department of the literary profession into which none but millionaires should venture.

Tom's equipment for a literary career was more complete than most aspirants can show. He took a good degree in classical honours at Cambridge, and he spent a year at Heidelberg. He was called to the Bar, and he read some law and knew the practice of the courts: he had the true litterateur's feeling for style: he had considerable experience in everything that belongs to sport: he was a genial kind of young man, who took his malt or his lemon-squash at the Savage Club in a sociable manner: his father had been lieutenant-colonel in a Line Regiment, and therefore he knew barrack life and language, and could understand officers and could talk their talk, and knew the ways of soldiers. A journalist and novelist should know every profession and every trade intimately. But there are few journalists or novelists who have at once the barracks and the university, the public school and the courts of law, German student life and London clubland, to work upon. With such a

start and by the aid of his own cleverness and energy, Tom was justified in aiming at the highest journalistic prizes.

And while he contemplated many years of drudgery before these should fall to him, behold! a thousand pounds a year more and a big house—in houses, beauty ought always to include bigness: there is no comfort where you cannot stretch your legs. A thousand pounds a year! Well, he could now do as he pleased. No more going off to “do” the Epsom crowd on Derby Day; no more crowding on board the press-boat for the University Race; no more hanging round the newspaper office for jobs; he could make his literary life for himself and bide his time. And above all, he could marry as soon as he pleased and without anxiety. What an incomparable inheritance! No anxiety: Katie’s future assured whatever happened to himself. And to marry at once, when it had seemed as if their engagement might possibly drag on for years! A long engagement is a hateful thing: give me one which is brief and rapturous, so brief that, when it ends with the wedding bells, both are still mindful of the first kiss, and still full of the first tender thoughts and the emotions of the first confession. Tom was horribly in love. Katie was the dearest of girls, and she had nobody in the wide world to look to but himself for protection and care; and now he could marry her at once! No wonder if his eyes filled with unaccustomed tears and his heart glowed when he thought of his inheritance and all it meant. Good, worthy, excellent Uncle Joseph! What had he done for a nephew who for his part regarded him with perhaps less affection than was due to so near a relation? Alas! Do any of us young men love our uncles as we should? Let this example be a lesson to us.

Already Tom had heard the banns put up at the parish church—for the first time of asking; “if any man know just cause or impediment,”—cause or impediment indeed! when no two young people ever loved each other more truly, and when they had a thousand a year and a house in Russell Square! Impediment? when Providence, working through Uncle Joseph, had actually prepared the way—carpeted the staircase, so to speak—and arranged that the course of true love should run smoothly, sweetly, swiftly between the most lovely banks of honeysuckle, rose and sweet-brier! Happy Tom! Happy Katie! It remained only to fix the day and to buy a few pretty dresses and to arrange for a simple wedding, where there would be no breakfast, because the bride had no cousins to ask—this you will immediately understand—and to arrange, in deference to each other, where they would go for the honeymoon. Should it be Paris, with gaiety and theatres, or should it be the seaside where they could wander hand-in-hand over the sands and listen to the quiet waves lapping the shore and watch the soft moonlight lying over the waters? I think it would have been Paris because the season was what we humorously call early spring, when French asparagus is exhibited in the shops, and by the seaside the east wind furrows the moonlit waters and causeth gooseflesh to those who wander along the sands.

Katie followed the romantic calling of daily governess. Owing to certain defects in her education, which had been fragmentary and subject to interruptions, she was quite the old-fashioned daily governess and not in the least like the young lady of Girton. In fact, I am afraid she knew nothing that a Girton girl calls knowledge. She therefore gave lessons in those families

which cannot afford the High School—they call it mixed (you may mix almost everything but girls)—and are far, far above the Board school in gentility, but cannot afford the modern certificated governess.

She was the daughter of a Gentleman. Mr. Willoughby Capel never allowed the world to forget that he was a Gentleman: there was no mistake possible about the fact; indeed it was more than an accident of birth, it was a profession. He dressed, spoke, and played up to that sacred calling: he did nothing; he despised all men who work. I wish, indeed, that it were possible to dwell upon the life of this eminent Gentleman. It must suffice, however, to state that he rose at eleven and took his cup of tea and his finger of toast in his bedroom while he dressed: that he performed this Function slowly and thoughtfully, attired in a magnificent dressing gown: that he sallied forth, when his toilette was complete, about noon, and returned at midnight regularly. There was no concealment about his method of spending the day: he simply went to the club—he belonged to a third-rate proprietary institution where the members were gentlemen, like himself, in somewhat reduced circumstances; he took his dinner there, and played billiards in the afternoon and whist in the evening. He was not a hawk, though he played for money: he had no friends, except the men at the club; no one ever called upon him at his lodgings, which were in Southampton Row: he was a curiously handsome man, well preserved, tall and dignified: but for the crow's feet round his eyes he might have passed for forty. And who he was, what he was, why he was, nobody knew, not even his daughter. There was no difficulty about money. The weekly bills were always paid, but Katie very well understood that if she wanted any



money for herself she must get it without asking her father, who wanted all there was for himself. Consequently, while he took his simple dinner of a slice of salmon and the joint, with a pint of St. Estephe, at the club, and played his whist for shilling points, his daughter went out every day teaching the respectable Emptage family, and in the evening studied at the Birkbeck Institute, or worked at home, trying to fill up some of the cracks and gaps and holes in her education. One regrets to note that after her engagement to Tom there came a sad falling off in her thirst for knowledge. History ceased to have attractions for her; she was no longer haunted by the Rule of Three; and she troubled herself no longer as to the boundaries of Thibet. 'Tis ever thus. When Love the Conqueror shows his rosy cheeks and dimpled chin, the Muses suddenly lose their good looks. It is most surprising to see the change which then comes over the poor things. They become wan and haggard; they put on spectacles: their hair falls off; they are fain to hide their once lovely figures with boys' jackets or any thing. Apollo smiles: they rush away shrieking, and nobody misses them.

I declare that Katie's love story was one of the sweetest, most touching, and most tender of any that I have ever known. Reader! you cannot know the beautiful histories that have to remain unwritten; partly because the shortness of the reader's life must be considered by the author; partly—it is even more important—because the shortness of his own life must be taken into account. This love story is one of the unwritten kind. Imagine, if you can, the lonely life of the girl left all day long by her father, and think how the young man came to her with love in his eyes and strength in his hand. The story contained every

interesting element that belongs to love, including the First impression, the second thought, the dawn of Suspicion, the Growth of Knowledge, the Siege of the Heart and its Successful Storm—in a word, all the places laid down upon the Carte du Tendre, together with some not to be found in that document, such as Joy and Wonder, Pride and Humility, Self-importance, Dignity, and Personal Responsibility. How can man or woman grow to completeness without the help of each other? And oh! the divine mystery of the pure selfishness of the pair who love! Do you think that Adam and Eve ever worried their heads, in the plenitude of their happiness, as to what might be going on beyond the hedge? Never, I am sure, till they came to live on that side and became personally interested in keeping out of the way of the lion and the tiger, and were admonished by the example of the bunny to avoid the rattlesnake and the alligator.

"Sir," said Mr. Willoughby Capel when Tom sought his consent, "as my daughter has no fortune I have no right to object, though I should have preferred for my son-in-law, I confess, an independent gentleman, such as myself; or, at least, one who was making a livelihood by a recognised profession, such as the Bar or the Church. I am glad, however, to think that when I am gone my child will be in good hands."

He said "when I am gone" with conventional solemnity, having no desire to go or any expectation of going.

The verb "to go," used in this sense, is not disagreeable because a personal application is never made. Yet Mr. Willoughby Capel had to go—only a fortnight later he had to go in the most unexpected manner. In fact, he was called upon to depart on the lonely journey without any warn-

ing at all. It seemed that he had heart disease, and he fell down dead in his room.

Katie thus became an orphan. She was also a distinguished and exceptional orphan, because, so far as she knew, she had not one single relation in the whole world. Uncles and aunts and cousins she must have had somewhere, but she knew nothing of them. She had understood when quite a child that she was never to ask her father about her family. Some there are who would cheerfully surrender all their cousins: Katie, who never had any, did not greatly deplore their loss; but at this juncture even Tom could not replace the lost cousins, because Tom, you see, knew no more than herself about her father's property, and there was not a scrap of paper to show what this was, where situated, or whence derived.

It really was a strange thing: not a single scrap of paper with so much as a note to show who were the deceased gentleman's lawyers; not a line to tell who were his people; in fact, not a word about himself or his income or anything. We speak familiarly of a man's desk, of his diaries, of his "papers." Everybody is supposed to be possessed of these things. Well, the late Mr. Willoughby Capel had nothing: in his chest of drawers were his clothes, and these, so far as could be gathered, constituted the whole of his property, except the sum of thirty pounds in gold, more than half of which went to bury him. This man went out of the world leaving nothing behind him but five or six suits of clothes. Could these be held up as the record of a useful life? Were these all he had to show for good works? Perhaps they might pass, because good works, we have been told, are but rags.

"Katie," said Tom for the twentieth time, "this is wonderful. Do you know nothing?"



"Nothing, Tom. Once he told me that my second name belonged to several of the women of my family. And that is all I ever heard about my family."

"Katharine Regina. It isn't much to go upon, is it?"

Tom put an advertisement in the papers calling on the relations of Willoughby Capel, deceased, to communicate with the advertiser. Nobody responded. Then he thought that perhaps some business letter might arrive which would give them the information they wanted. But none came.

When a man like Mr. Willoughby Capel, of good manners, evidently born and bred among gentlemen and gentlewomen, separates himself from his fellows and lives in obscurity and maintains silence about his antecedents, there is one conclusion which it is impossible to avoid. Tom, the most charitable of mankind, was fain to draw that conclusion. He made no more inquiries. And Katie, just to tide over the time until her marriage, went to live at a certain Institution or Home for Ladies who have to maintain themselves. It was only a temporary refuge, and in her lightness of heart and the selfishness of her happiness, she laughed at it and called it the House Beautiful, or the Earthly Paradise or Lucky Lodge, seeing at first only the outside of things and as yet being ignorant of the things that lay hidden beneath that ridiculous outside.

And then the inheritance fell in. Oh, brave Uncle Joseph! And very soon the lessons would be given up and the House Beautiful would be exchanged for the house in Russell Square.

Yes, the inheritance fell in. Oh, good Uncle Joseph! And for a week there was happiness inexpressible. The Cup was at the Lip—and then—then . . . .

## CHAPTER II.

## "And the Lip."

ALL things are transitory, but man—who has been much humoured—has grown to expect a certain length of rope. Therefore, an inheritance which only lasts a week, and then, before one has had time to draw a single cheque, vanishes away into the Ewigkeit, is not even respectably transitory; it is ridiculous—the poet, who must have a certain time over which to spread himself, would refuse so absurd a subject. An inheritance of a week, without touching a single guinea's worth of it, is as foolish as the imaginary winning of a great prize in a lottery. Pleasures of the imagination for a week; plans and schemes and vague rainbow-tinted phantoms of future joys for seven days, and then—nothing—nothing at all.

The lovers sat hand-in-hand, just a week after coming into their inheritance, upon the stairs of the great empty house in Russell Square. No one else was in the house except the caretaker, one of those old ladies who are not in the least afraid of loneliness and ghosts; and are only truly happy when they have got a fine roomy basement with a scullery, a coal-cellar, and two large kitchens all to themselves and a great empty house over their heads. The furniture may crack all over that house, and the stairs may creak after dark: there may be clanking chains, groans, shrieks, sobbings, wails, and trampling feet at midnight: there may be shadowy sheeted figures in the empty rooms at twilight: the caretaker is

not in the least concerned. These things, with the house and the furniture, are the property of the landlord: she is there to look after them, ghosts and all. At night she sleeps, and all day long she makes tea. Nobody ever saw a caretaker yet who was not making tea. The invisible caretaker, therefore, remained in the basement below making tea, while Tom and Katie sat upon the stairs. They might have sat on the drawing-room sofas or in the library easy-chairs had they chosen, but they preferred the stairs, perhaps on account of the novelty. It is only at an evening party, as a rule, that young people get the chance of sitting on the stairs.

They were sitting on the stairs at the drawing-room landing, hand-in-hand, and their faces were much more grave than befits young lovers. Something—the word means more, the additional explanatory adjective “bad” is understood—something had happened to account for this gloom.

“Is it really and truly all gone?” asked Katie presently.

“It is all gone, dear—vanished away—just as if it had never existed; in fact, it never did exist. But there can be no doubt about it. Our grand fortune was just dangled before us for one week and then it was snatched away. In cherry-bob, it is always thought mean for the bobster not to let the bobber have the cherry.”

“Oh! Tom—it is wonderful!”

“It is indeed. I think of it with awe. Some wonderful things are also disgusting, Katie. Nobody ever heard of a more wonderful thing or a more disgusting. If it is any comfort to us, let us say it over and over again. Truly wonderful! Providential! Quite a dispensation! An overruling, an——”

"Don't, Tom. It will not mend matters to talk bitterly and sarcastically."

"All right, Katie dear. Let us pretend that we like the new arrangement better than the old."

"No—no. But tell me more, Tom. How did you find it out?"

"It was found out for me, you see, Katie. I've got one first cousin on my uncle's side. He is a solicitor, which ought to have pleased the old man, but he is also fond of sport and billiards and so forth. Jem Rolfe is his name. I knew he would be awfully savage at being left out of the will, and I thought to make it up a bit to him; and I hadn't got any solicitor of my own, and so I thought I would keep the thing in the family and I asked him to take charge of my affairs for me and wind up things, as they say. Jem isn't a bad sort of fellow. He doesn't bear malice against me, and he took over the job and went through the papers. First he began firing notes at me every other hour, telling me what he had discovered—good investments here and bad investments there. In short, he found out what the estate means and where it is invested and all about it—details which did not concern me in the least. The notes are all part of the business I suppose, and will appear on the bill of costs. However, the notes contained nothing that would arouse any kind of suspicion, and I began to think we were going to be rich beyond the 'dreams of avarice,' as Dr. Johnson said. And then there came a check—there always is a check."

"Well, Tom?" for he stopped, though it was some comfort for him to feel that he was telling the story in a good descriptive style which would have done credit to the paper. "What was the check?"

"You don't know Jem. His style is rather

sporting. But of course, being a lawyer, he knows what he is about. Two days ago he sent a letter begging me to call upon him; and then he staggered me by telling me that there was a charge on my uncle's estate of certain trust-money amounting, with accumulations, to about twenty thousand pounds. It was originally twelve thousand pounds, out of which an annuity of three hundred pounds had been paid, and the rest was to accumulate for the annuitant's heirs in some way. My cousin remembered this annuitant when he was articled to my uncle. So that our inheritance was twenty thousand less than it seemed to be. That's a pretty big cantel to be cut off. But worse remained. For Jem went on to tell me that, considering the depreciation of certain stocks and the losses my uncle had incurred in his investments, he did not think there would be much left when that trust-money was set aside. First he said 'not much'—that was to let me down easy: he then told me that there would be nothing at all left—nothing at all—when this liability was discharged."

"Oh! who are the people who are going to get the twenty thousand pounds?"

"I don't know. That is Jem's business—not mine. I have washed my hands of the whole thing, and he has undertaken to carry it through and get his costs out of the estate. So that after all, the nephew who is to benefit by my uncle's will is the one he wished to keep out. As for the heirs, when twenty thousand pounds are waiting for them, they will not be slow to turn up."

Katie sighed. "Is that all, Tom?"

"That is all, my dear. It couldn't be much more, because the part cannot be greater than the whole."

Katie laughed this time—not a merry noisy

laugh, but a low cheerful laugh peculiar to woman, the consoler kept for occasions when heavy moods and disappointment and bitter words in man have to be exorcised.

"Tom, it is like the splendid dream of the man with the basket full of eggs: our castle is shattered."

"My dear"—Tom looked into the clear eyes, so full of courage and of faith, which met his gaze—"My dear"—here he kissed her—"it is for you that I lament it most. You were going to be so happy, with nothing to do and nothing to worry you: the life of comfort was to be yours—doesn't every woman desire the life of comfort above all things? Now we must go on with our work again, no better off than our neighbours, just as poor and just as struggling."

"Why should we grumble at that, Tom?"

"And we must put off our marriage, Katie."

"Yes, Tom; but then we never hoped to be married so soon, did we?"

"And you will have to continue your horrible lessons."

"Oh! Tom, don't trouble about that. So long as I have you I am happy—and remember, we have had a whole week of pure happiness, thinking we were lifted high above the common lot. And now it is all over, and we are not a bit worse off than we were before."

"When Christopher Sly, Katie, was taken back to the roadside, he was never so happy again for thinking of the wonderful dream he had. To be sure, Christopher was an uneducated kind of person. Fortunately none of the fellows at the club know about it; so that while on the one hand, as they used to say, there have been no congratulations and no envy, so on the other, there will be no condolences and no secret joy."



"Then, Tom, forget the whole thing. Put it out of your mind."

"I will, Katie, as soon as I can. But still, without any more crying, tell me, Katie, did you ever hear of a more awful sell?"

"Tom, I certainly never did. I am quite sure there never was such a sell before. But at sells, you know, one is expected to laugh, just to show that you enter into the spirit of the thing and are not a bit offended."

She sprang to her feet, shaking out the folds of her dress. It was only a plain stuff dress, nothing at all compared with the magnificent frock she might have worn had the intention of Uncle John been carried out.

"Come, Tom, it is done with. But I have a fancy to go all over the house, just to see what might have been ours, and then we will bid farewell to the inheritance."

She stood over him, a tall graceful girl, light-haired, bright-eyed, her face full of the sunshine which lies on the cheeks of every woman who is true of heart and thinks no evil and is young and is loved.

"Come, Tom," she repeated.

He sat hanging his head dolefully.

"You are always right, Katie. But that isn't all," he added, under his breath, as he took her hand and went up the stairs with her.

It was not unlike the scene where Virginia takes leave of her island home and her gardens; but in this case it was Paul, as you shall see, who was about to embark for foreign shores.

They went upstairs to the very top of the house where be the servants' bedrooms. They opened every door, looked round each room and shut the door again softly.

"With each floor," said Tom, "we take leave

of two hundred pounds a year. There are five floors. Farewell, first two hundred."

Below were the guests' rooms, furnished with due regard to comfort as it was understood in the forties—that is to say, in the four-post and feather-bed style, with vast chests of mahogany drawers. "Farewell, second two hundred," said Tom.

Below the visitors' rooms were the nurseries, day and night-nursery; but these rooms looked forlorn and neglected, because it was seventy years since they had echoed to the patter of children's feet and the music of children's voices. As Tom looked into them a sadness fell upon his soul, as if he were robbed—with the inheritance—of his children. He did not communicate this thought to Katie; but he said nothing, and descended to the lower floor in silence.

On the first floor there was a large drawing-room in front, and at the back a bedroom which had been Uncle Joseph's, furnished in the same style as those above. The drawing-room had been newly furnished by Uncle Joseph, when he married, about the year 1844, in what was then the best style. Nothing had since been added, so that this room was a pleasing study of domestic furniture in mediæval ages before æsthetics had been invented. There were high-backed sofas and solid chairs and settees, and round tables covered with expensively-bound books. There were engravings on the walls which were clothed with a rich warm red paper, and the carpet showed a pattern of large red and green flowers unlike any of the flowers with which Nature adorns the gay parterre. But everything was faded—wall-paper, carpet, the binding of the books, the gilding of the settees. The drawing-room, in fact, had not been used for thirty years.

There was a grand piano in it. Katie sat down



and struck a few chords. It was out of tune, but that seemed appropriate. Then she looked at Tom, whose seriousness seemed to increase rather than to vanish, and her eyes became soft and dim, and she bent her head lest he should see the tears that filled them. Tom was standing at the window. He beckoned to her, and she joined him.

"It is a beautiful garden, dear. At this time of year"—it was the middle of March, and five o'clock in the afternoon, and one could distinctly see green buds upon some of the more sanguine bushes—"at this time of the year there would have been delightful walking in the garden, wouldn't there? But the fortune is gone, and . . . Katie, sing that German song I taught you. I think we shall like to remember that you sang it in the house that was our own for a week."

Katie went back to the piano and sang, with full and steady voice, a certain German song Tom had taught her, both words and music, beginning:

"Adé! mein Schatz, adé! wir müssen scheiden."

"Yes," said Tom, "Adé! wir müssen scheiden."

She thought he meant that the fortune and he were bound to part, and she laughed. Then she closed the piano and they went downstairs to the library, where the great solid mahogany shelves stood laden with the standard works of fifty years ago. Men like Uncle Joseph buy no modern ephemeral stuff.

"Tom," said the girl, "it was in this room that you were to sit and write your books, while I was to read or to work quietly beside you. It would have been happiness enough for me only to be with you."

"Katie!"

"The dream has been a beautiful dream. It

has brought us together so closely. I know now more of your ambitions than ever I knew before. We have talked with more open hearts. Let us thank God, Tom, for sending us this dream. Do not let us repine because it all came to nothing. We have been rich, and we are now poor. Yet we are richer than ever we were before. What is it that was said long, long ago—but not of a miserable treasure—‘The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away’? You will have all that you desire, Tom. You shall write the most beautiful books still, but not quite in the way we thought.”

“My dear, you are a saint and an angel.” (He took her in his arms. Why did the tears rise to his eyes?) “You sang that song just now—Katie, you meant to bid adieu to the inheritance. But, my dear, it was for me. I am your treasure—you are mine—and we must part.”

“Tom!”

“We must part awhile, dear. Only for a little while—for six months or so.”

“Tom!”

“They offered me just before this will-o’-the-wisp fortune came to us the post of War Correspondent in Egypt. I have now accepted it.”

“Oh, Tom!”

“I could not afford to refuse. They want me to go very much. You see, Katie, I know something about soldiering, and I can talk French, which is always a help everywhere, and they think I am smart and active.”

“Oh! Tom—to go out to the fighting!”

“A War Correspondent,” he said mendaciously, “has to be more than commonly careful. Why, I shall be all the time thinking of how to get safe home to my Katie.”

She shivered.

"They will give me a hundred pounds a month and all my expenses," he said. "We shall save enough out of it to buy all our furniture, dear, and when I come home we will have the wedding bells rung."

He tried to speak cheerfully, but there was a melancholy ring in his voice.

"If I could only think that you would be cared for when I am away, Katie, my poor, friendless girl."

"As for me, I shall do very well, Tom. All day long I shall be with my children; and in the evening there is Harley House, and some of the girls there are pleasant and friendly when they are not too tired with their work, poor things, and when they have got any work to do."

"Dear, tell me that I have done right in taking this offer. It is not only a well-paid offer and an honour to receive it, but if I do the work well it will give me a far better and safer position on the paper. They never forget a man who has been a good War Correspondent."

"Yes, Tom, I am sure that you have done wisely. Do not fret about me. Oh, I shall get on very well indeed without you. Write to me by every mail that you can—not a long letter which would take you time—but a single word to keep my heart up."

"My dear, my love." He caught her with both hands and kissed her. "My dear, my love," he repeated, "I must leave you alone. If you want anything, go to my cousin; I am sure he will help you. I have written the address here—don't lose it."

"But when must you go, Tom? Not yet for a week or two?"

He held her tightly in his arms.

"Now, my dear, to-day—to-day. I have only

time to get things together. I start by the eight o'clock train, and travel day and night. We must part here, dear, in the castle of our dream,' he smiled sadly, "and we must part at once. Courage, Katie, it is but for a few months. And then—and then . . . Kiss me once more, dear. Oh! kiss me. Good-bye, dear, good-bye!"

The solicitor, Tom's cousin, saw him off at Charing Cross.

"Remember," said Tom earnestly, "if there should be anything left over after paying that trust-money to the heirs, and if anything should happen to me, you will give all to Katie. I have given her your address, and she will go to you if she wants anything. Write to me about the heirs of the trust when you find them. I am curious to know who they are. And—and—don't forget—in case you know—this letter is for Katie, and everything that belongs to me is to be hers as well. I ought to have insured my life and made my will, but there was no time. Will you charge yourself with this, Jem?"

"Oh, you'll be all right, old man," said his cousin with the cheerfulness—nobody is so cheerful as the man who is not going—proper to the occasion. "I wish I had your chance. Good-bye. I won't forget, and I won't lose the letter."

"You promise, then," said Tom. "I trust my girl to you."

"I promise faithfully, Tom. You may trust her to me."

"It is a solemn promise, Jem?"

"A sacred pledge."

Their hands met with the grasp of two men who trust each other

Then the guard waved his hand, and the train rolled out of the station. Jem Rolfe stood looking

after it until it vanished across the river. Then he went to the refreshment-room, and had a whisky and potash. He was one of those young men who in all times of thought, perplexity, or forecast assist the brain with a whisky and potash, or its equivalent.

Katie remained in the empty library. The beautiful inheritance had vanished like a dream. And Tom was gone to Egypt. She sat in the quiet room until the day drew to its close. Then she got up and went softly into the hall and out into the street. And the caretaker, who was still making tea in the basement, and heard the patter of her feet and the gentle closing of the door, thought she was one of the ghosts, who generally, however, do not begin to walk about an empty house until after sunset.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### Harley House, Cleveland Square.

**T**WO months later. At eight o'clock, on a cold spring evening, the drawing-room of Harley House, Cleveland Square, is generally as full as you may find it all the year round.

It is a salon of more than common interest. To begin with, there are no men in it. Male visitors are not allowed to penetrate into the drawing-room of Harley House. This removes it at once from the common drawing-room of society. Next, the ladies who use this drawing-room do not appear in evening dress: most of them, in fact, have only one dress, which serves them for morning and evening, summer and winter, until it falls

to pieces, and how it is replaced no man knoweth. Again, in other drawing-rooms there is idleness; but here, for the most part, there is work of some kind generally going on. And in other drawing-rooms there is light and airy talk, all about nothing, with laughing, singing, and little jokes such as girls love; but here the talk is subdued in tone, sometimes discontented, sometimes angry, sometimes exasperated. If any laugh, it must be one of the younger ladies newly joined, and then the rest all look up with astonishment. As for a joke, no one ever made one in Harley House. If it was made, it would fall flat.

There are about half-a-dozen of these drawing-rooms to be found in London. They belong to as many Institutions, all of which are most useful and do any quantity of good, and are real blessings to the people for whom they are founded; and yet—being Institutions, they cannot help it—they are so clogged and hedged about with rules and regulations that life in them is somewhat like life in a prison or a workhouse. The rules, to be sure, are most beneficent and framed for the general welfare. No lady who respects herself would, for instance, desire to use a candle in her bedroom after the gas is turned out, or to lie in bed after half-past eight in the morning, or to be out after half-past nine in the evening—how *can* people remain out after half-past nine? Nor would anyone wish to sit in the drawing-room after half-past ten at night, or to be out of bed after a quarter to eleven, or to receive visitors of the opposite sex—the last, indeed, is a most impossible desire, and one never yet felt in the feminine breast. Male visitors? Creatures in hats and coats? Young men? Is there any girl so weak and so giddy and so thoughtless as to desire the companionship of young men? Therefore the



regulations of Harley House are accepted in a loving and grateful spirit: it is felt that not only does the House provide for the residents lodgings and board on the cheapest terms, but it guards them from the dangers which beset a mixed society where men and women actually fall in love and marry each other, and where girls who might be looking forward to healthy, honest work all their lives, and to earning as much as a pound a week, if they are lucky, are actually taken away and placed in suburban villas, and made to do nothing at all but order the dinner, dust the drawing-room, look after the baby, and blow up the housemaid. Why, in Harley House the fortunate residents are hard at work all day long, and have also the pleasure—it must be a real pleasure to all of them—of making their own beds and keeping their cubicles tidy. No babies to nurse, however, no great hulking husband to be messing around, no dinners to order, and no one to consider but themselves and their own personal happiness and comfort. The drawing-room at Harley House, thus free from care, ought to be the happiest, liveliest, mirthfullest, brightest, merriest, joyfulest place in the whole world.

Somehow, it is not.

Harley House is governed by a Committee of six matrons of proved virtue and religion. It is a Home for Ladies who have to work for their living; in other words, for Ladies who have to live cheaply. The founders recognised the fact that a pound a week, taking one week with another, is rather more than most working ladies can ever expect to make. They have, therefore, ascertained the very lowest charges for lodging and meals on which the House can be kept up, and they charge the residents accordingly. Thus it has been proved by experiment that a young

woman of tolerably robust appetite can be fed, not luxuriously, with jam, cake, chocolate-cream, ices and cold chicken, but sufficiently, so as to keep the machine in good working order, for fifteenpence-halfpenny a day—it is really fifteenpence, but the odd halfpenny is added for luxury and the putting on of fat. The Committee of Harley House therefore give the young ladies breakfast for threepence, and tea for the same; dinner is sevenpence, and supper is twopence-halfpenny. For three-and-sixpence a week a girl can have a bed in a cubicle all to herself. In other words, without counting dinner, a meal which in hard times may be neglected, a young lady can live in Harley House for eight shillings and twopence-halfpenny a week; so that if she is so lucky as to be making a whole pound a week, there remain eleven shillings and ninepence-halfpenny to spend. If you deduct sevenpence a day for dinner and eightpence for Sunday, there still remain seven shillings and sevenpence-halfpenny. The girl who cannot make seven shillings and sevenpence-halfpenny a week suffice for washing, dress, gloves, boots, amusements, religion, charity, travelling, omnibuses, literature, music, and recreation generally, must be a wicked and a wasteful girl.

The House is administered by a matron, who orders the dinners, admonishes the servants (and sometimes, for wicked and wasteful ways, the young ladies), reads prayers night and morning, turns out the gas, and collects the money beforehand. If she is a kindly and sympathetic woman, as sometimes happens, she can become to the girls a second mother. If, as very often happens, she is a person of austere manners, rigid virtue, and unflinching adherence to the regulations, she can convert the home into a prison, the drawing-



room to an exercise yard, and the cubicles into cells. Sometimes the home is visited by the Committee, who go round and taste the soup, so to speak, confer as to the accounts, and consider the cases of those ill-advised young people who have requested permission to stay out for an hour later than is allowed by the rules.

Among the many useful and beautiful inventions which wait for the Man—I am sure that the Woman will never bring any of them along—is an Institution or Home for Working Ladies which they will love. It is very much wanted, because in these latter days there are so many ladies who have to work. And the number is daily increasing so that it will be wanted very much more. In fact, we seem to be getting so poor that in all probability the next generation will know of no other ladies than those who work.

In my mind's eye I see the Perfect Home clearly.

First there are no rules or regulations at all in this house.

No rules at all. Except one, which is not a rule so much as a condition, as one has to breathe in order to live, a thing which no one objects to until he gets asthma. This condition is, that bed and board must be paid for beforehand. The absence of rules is the only thing wanted to make such a Home perfect. The drawing-room will be thrown open every evening to callers and visitors—the fashionable time for calling will be half-past eight: of course visitors of the opposite sex will be welcomed and entertained with sweet speech, sweet smiles, and sweet looks: there will be music and, if the young people like, dancing; as everybody must go to work next morning, the dances will be small and early; every girl will thus have her chance of the wooing which to some is the

necessity of their souls: the young fellows engaged all day in the City will find out where they can pass the evening in delightful society with the sweetest girls possible, and will turn coldly from the billiard-room and the music hall. As for the administration of the house, it will be conducted by the residents themselves, who will admit only ladies of their own style and manners; so that if one of them prove of ill temper, evil tongue, and low breeding, she will be ordered to depart at once and find her own level; and if one should bring 'Arry and 'Arriet to the house, she will be invited, firmly and sternly, to descend to another home more suitable to herself and her friends. For there will be a great number of these homes, graduated upwards as beautifully as Standard Reading Books, from that in which 'Arry, free of manners, easy of speech, mirthful and hearty and hoisterous—bless him!—will find a welcome and a congenial atmosphere, to that in which the most æsthetic young lady will converse and exchange other people's ideas with the most highly cultured young man. And all without any rules; and, in all, elderly and middle-aged ladies whose presence will steady and restrain the younger members.

The drawing-room at Harley House is of course a large room, because it belongs to one of the large houses of Cleveland Square, Bloomsbury. The curtains, the wall-paper, and the carpet look as though they had done service enough and might now be dismissed. But everybody in the House knows very well that there is no money to buy new things, and that, like the stair-carpet which is in holes, they will probably have to last a long time yet. Now, in the Home without rules, the ladies will unite to contrive new curtains and carpets and a better wall-paper, and will be always trying to make the place pretty with the

little odds and ends which cost nothing but a little taste and ingenuity. So that there will be none of the shabbiness which does undoubtedly hang over Harley House. But what matters shabbiness, since there are no men admitted?

The residents of Harley House are not all girls. Some of them, who have been here for a long time and occupy chairs near the fire by prescriptive right, are middle-aged and even elderly. Most of them, however, are quite young: they are a floating and uncertain class: they come because they are hard-up, stay a few weeks or months because they cannot help themselves, sniff at the regulations, speak contemptuously of the Committee, and then, if prospects brighten, hasten to some place where the presence of young men is not forbidden, and where one can be out after half-past nine without seeking permission beforehand and explaining the reasons for this wild burst.

To the former class undoubtedly belonged two ladies sitting side by side, bolt upright, with a certain primness of attitude which recalled, to those who could remember the early days of Her Majesty's reign, memories of governesses in the forties. In fact, they had been daily governesses in the forties when they were young. Now they were grey-haired, and each wore a little prim curl at the side, and to those who might remember the forties they looked as if they ought to have had a black-velvet band across the forehead with a steel buckle. They were dressed in black, they were exactly alike, and they were quite clearly sisters. In their hands was some work, but it advanced slowly. Their thin faces were beautiful, with the beauty given by patience, resignation, and suffering—they had now found rest and a haven for the remainder of their days. The

regulations caused no discomfort to them, because they asked for no male visitors, did not desire to be out after half-past nine, and wanted nothing more than a place where they could sit down and meditate on the long rest awaiting them after their hard day's work. They were Miss Augusta and Miss Beatrice Apsey. In the distant time when they owned a living father, they lived in a Cathedral Close and their father was a Canon.

On the other side of the fireplace sat another lady, who was also clearly one of the permanent residents. She was gaunt and hard of features, with discontent and restlessness marked in her face. She had a book in her lap, but she read very little. For her, too, the past was nearly done, and the only future before her was that which has to be reached by crossing a certain river.

At the table, a bundle in her lap, sat a woman still young, not more than thirty, at work diligently, even fiercely, never lifting her head from her work, but sewing as if for life. Persons experienced in such matters would have recognised that her work was of a very difficult and beautiful kind, embroidery of the highest art which should be worth large sums of money. She was dark of complexion and beautiful still, with a shapely head and regular classical features, and had she raised her eyes from her work you would have perceived that they were such as a painter loves to gaze upon and to draw, deep and dark and limpid. But they were full of sadness; there was no light of laughter in them, and on her lips there was no light of smiles. It was the face of a woman no longer happy. While she worked, her lips moved continually as if reproaching somebody—perhaps herself.

The table had a few magazines and papers

upon it. There were the *Illustrated* and the *Queen*, and certain harmless and goody periodicals such as Committees of Institutions consider adapted to the intellect of lady residents. Nobody, however, though the room was pretty full, was reading. Perhaps this was due to the fact that it was Thursday evening, so that the weekly papers were stale. Perhaps, however, it was because the people in the room were all tired and cared not to do anything.

They were nearly all girls between eighteen and four or five and twenty. It was for them, and not for the elder ladies, that the Institution really was founded and the regulations framed, so that they ought to have shown in their faces and their demeanour the liveliness of gratitude. No doubt they were grateful—"and all that"—but they were heavy-eyed.

There were about fifteen or twenty of them: they were all young ladies who work, not ladies of the ballet, or ladies of the bar, or ladies who pose upon the stage in lovely costumes, or ladies who stand behind counters; nor were they Young Persons or Young Girls: they were young ladies—that is, girls born and educated in some kind of refinement, whose fathers and brothers followed the pursuits allowed to gentlemen. The most fortunate among them were the girls in the Civil Service, Post Office and Telegraph Service. These get regular pay and are not afraid of losing their work. For this reason very few of them find their way to Harley House. The rest were typewriters, clerks in offices, cashiers in shops, governesses of the cheaper kind, who have not qualified at one of the new colleges for women and have no certificates and cannot hope to become mistresses in the High Schools where teachers are properly paid, but which are driving



the poor governesses of the past out of the field; teachers of music who have not been to the Royal Academy or the Royal College, teachers of drawing and artists who have carried away prizes for dexterity at South Kensington and think that they only want a picture to be accepted by the Academy in order to become famous in a day and to make their fortunes in a year. Meantime, those who do not teach haunt the National Gallery in hopes of getting a commission to copy a picture. Others were private secretaries and collectors of materials for men and women who make speeches, write articles, and advocate causes: others, again, were in the "literary" line. This includes those who write stories for any who will buy them—little books for religious publishers at five pounds the book, and verses for children's magazines at a halfpenny a line; who collect and search and investigate for all kinds of students, writers, genealogists, and everybody who wants anything found out; who copy manuscripts and who, generally, stand outside the door of publishers and editors, waiting. "They also serve, who only stand and wait." Pity that they do not get paid as well. Who can enumerate the thousand ways in which poor ladies try to earn their bread? The twenty girls in this room might be taken, however, to represent in a way all these ways.

They had nearly all come home from work by this time. In most assemblies of girls there will be heard a susurrus of universal chatter, with occasional bursts of merry laughter and a snatch of song: the most remarkable thing about this room was the silence of the girls. A few talked languidly in whispers, but most of them sat each apart and alone in silence: two or three, laid full length upon their backs on the sofas, seemed contented simply to be at rest—these were the

cashiers of shops who have to stand all day; others sat back in their chairs leaning their heads upon their clasped hands, an attitude which betokens complete physical exhaustion. Nobody was reading, nobody was laughing, nobody was singing. The general depression was not due at all to the regulations of the Home: it had nothing to do with the Committee: the girls were not in the least longing to be out after nine-thirty, nor were they pining for the society of young men. They were simply tired.

Desperately tired. There is no other word which adequately describes the situation. Every evening those of the girls who have got work come home desperately tired. Those who have none are despondent. When the evenings are long and the weather is fine, the girls shake off some of their languor and lassitude by walking round the squares, which are quiet places, and for the most part free from the Prowler. Moreover, it is refreshing to look through the railings at the gardens. When the evenings close in early and the nights are cold and rainy, there is nothing to do but to bring their fatigue to the gas-heated atmosphere of the drawing-room and sit there until it is bed-time. Perhaps if the place was a little livelier and the male visitor was admitted, the drawing-room would be a means of shaking off their fatigue and taking them out of themselves.

Desperately tired. Most of the girls who work get longer hours than the men and shorter pay. If two creatures do exactly the same amount of work they ought to have the same strength. But Nature refuses to girls the strength which she has given to men: custom prevents them from making the most of their strength by the help of much beef and beer; it even insists that women shall not endeavour to make themselves strong by



taking beef and beer in reasonable quantities and causes them to dress in irrational ways; does not suffer them to take exercise, confines them in hot rooms with bad air, and very often makes them stand all day long. Therefore, they are much more fatigued in the evening than the young men, who will cheerfully go to music halls, theatres, billiard-rooms, volunteer drills, evening classes, gymnasias, and all kinds of places, after a long day's work. There is another thing which has not been sufficiently considered. It is a great and neglected law. Nature, whenever she turns out a new baby of the feminine sex, says to her as a last admonition: "And, my dear, when you grow up remember that you will hate, loathe, and detest any kind of work except one. I design you to be a wife and a mother and a helpmeet for one man. You may miss your vocation and you may console yourself with other interests. But if you have to work for pay and under orders you will be unhappy."

They all hate having to work. The better educated they are, the more they hate it.

The law cannot be broken for ever. In a better state of society it will not only be recognised but even enforced. In other words, women will not be forced to work. Only those women shall work who choose, and their pay, if they work at trades, shall be the same as that of the men.

Women would then be entirely dependent upon the men. Why not? There would probably be a tax for the maintenance of those women who remained unmarried and preferred idleness. It would be levied on the unmarried men, and there would be so few that it would not be felt. But then no man would be allowed to marry under the age of twenty-eight.

It will be truly a revolutionary step, and

though at first it makes one giddy to think what would happen afterwards, the happiness of the women would be assured. Of course the women would be encouraged, even taught as a sacred duty, to lay themselves out for certain kinds of work. Mere idleness, they will be trained to understand, is sinful. If they are ambitious they will cultivate learning, literature, science, history, philosophy, poetry, the arts of fiction and painting and sculpture, the drama and acting, singing and music, fine-work embroidery, and lawn tennis.

Some, again, will study the science and mystery of cooking: some will follow the work of the house and give themselves up to the care of other people's babies, until their own time arrives: some will become nurses and even physicians: they will be taught that it is good not to waste their lives should they not marry and have children: they will be honoured, flattered, caressed, and praised. They will perhaps be assured that they are the equals, nay, the superiors of men, whose intellect, they will be told, is a poor thing compared with that of woman. But they will never be hired to do hack-work and they will not be allowed to enter the labour market at all. No woman, in the future, shall ever receive a wage, and shall never be submissive to any master except one of her own choice, and then only as much as shall please her. But with those who love, submission is natural and mutual obedience is sweet. There shall be no wages; no hire; no competition; no standing in the market like kitchenmaids at a statute fair. Men, so long as they are so foolish as not to combine, may compete with, outbid, undersell, and ruin each other. They are so strong that it hurts them less. But women should not follow their example, and in the good time coming they shall not.

It was about a quarter to nine when the door opened and another girl came in. She was a tall and beautiful girl—you have already seen her—with light curly hair and grey eyes and a face full of sweetness: made for love—if that means anything, because nearly every girl's face shows the same benevolent intention of Nature. Now, alas! her face was full of trouble. The other girls' faces showed the depression which comes of fatigue and monotonous work, but there was trouble of another kind on Katie's face. When she appeared, one or two of them looked at her enquiringly and read the answer to their question in her eyes.

She sat down beside another girl. Evidently they were friends, these two.

"Is there news?" she whispered.

Katie shook her head.

Lily, the other girl, pressed her hand in silent sympathy. She was a dark-haired, swarthy, low-browed girl, with deep-set eyes, black eyebrows which met, and Spanish features, though her name was Lily and she ought to have been fair and dressed in white. Lily would have looked well in a mantilla and in black velvet and a diamond coronet. She was born for black velvet, yet by one of Nature's mistakes she had to wear black stuff.

"There never will be any news, Lily. Don't speak to me just yet, dear."

At this moment the two old ladies by the fire rose from their chairs, and the elder, generally known as Miss Augusta, went to the piano and began to play. She always played every evening, because she thought that music is good for the soul and for the temper and for the tired limbs and the irritated brain. But the music must be good, and therefore she played Mendelssohn's Songs without Words, which go straight to the heart in a way

hardly achieved by any other music. She played in a quiet old-fashioned way, with the emphasis which belonged to the time—it was a sentimental time—when she was young.

The other old lady, her sister, Miss Beatrice, began to walk about the room and to talk to the residents. It was her opinion that young persons can be greatly helped by sympathy and kindness, and that, being an old person herself, she might perhaps administer words of comfort and peace while her sister was moving their hearts by the power of music. And, indeed, there were times when the atmosphere was heavy with despondency.

First, she sat down beside the woman who was so fiercely working.

“My dear,” she said, “you have been working at your business all day. Your cheeks are flushed and your hand is burning. Cannot you put away your work for a single evening?”

“No—no. I must work. I must work. The others may rest—but I must work. I must work.”

“Why must you work, my dear? You are so much better off than the rest of us. You have such a handsome salary. Why must you work?”

It was known that this person had a salary of three pounds a week, actually three pounds! As much as is given to a curate, and yet there was no evening except Sunday when she did not work fiercely, until the last moment before the gas was turned out.

“You are a Christian?” the worker asked in reply.

“Surely,” said Miss Beatrice. “Oh, my dear, that is a strange question! What other comfort is there for us poor women, and what other hope?”

“For those who are His, He is crucified. Those who are not His—must be crucified by themselves.”

It was a strange answer to be made in a respectable Home where the fiercer emotions, including despair, are supposed not to enter. They are excluded—with the young men.

"My dear, my dear," the poor lady trembled at the mere strength of the words, "you terrify me. I do not understand what you mean."

"Then, Miss Beatrice," said the embroideress, "it means that I must work—day and night—and never stop."

Miss Beatrice sighed, and went on her way. She stopped next before the elderly and gaunt-looking person who sat on the other side of the fire.

"Are you better this evening, Miss Stidolph?" she asked.

"No. I am worse."

"Was there the opening you expected?"

"No, there was not. There never is, for age. It is a sin now to grow old."

"Oh, no! But people do like their children to be taught by young and light-hearted women. As we grow older we lose some of our light-heartedness, do we not? And some of our pleasant looks, perhaps."

"I never had any pleasant looks, or any lightness of heart," said Miss Stidolph with a little laugh. "Life has always been a burden to me. Don't waste time on me, Miss Beatrice. Perhaps something will turn up in the literary way. We heard at the Museum yesterday that there was work got by some of the ladies there, and people are all come back to town."

"Yes; and your translations are known to be so correct, Miss Stidolph. Oh! I am sure you will get some work now. And you have got well through the dead season, haven't you?"

When Miss Beatrice left her, the gaunt hard-

featured lady lay back in her chair with something like a smile upon her face. Consolation often takes the form of subtle and crafty flattery. Miss Beatrice knew that if there was one subject which more than another afforded gratification to Miss Stidolph, it was the excellence of her translations. Other translators made blunders in grammar and mistakes in idiom. Miss Stidolph was always correct.

Then Miss Beatrice went to a girl who lay upon the sofa, stretched supine, careless of what went on around her, sick to death of monotonous labour and a dull and dreary life. She bent over her and patted her cheek and whispered things soothing and soft to her, and kissed her forehead, so that the girl sat up and smoothed her hair and moved away to the table, where she took up a book and began to read. And all the time Miss Augusta, with sympathetic emphasis, played her Mendelssohn.

What with the music and the gentle words, the girls began to throw off their tiredness and to brighten up, and some of them even went so far as to talk *chiffons*, which is a sure and certain sign of recovery.

Lastly, this daughter of consolation came to Katie and the girl who sat beside her holding her hand.

"Lily, my dear," she said to the latter, "have you heard of anything?"

Lily shook her head.

"I have heard of a great many things," she said drearily, "and I have been tramping about after them. To-day, it was a photographer's. He wanted a girl to sell his things, and he offered fifteen shillings a week—which wasn't so bad. But the man! . . ." she shuddered. "There was degradation even in talking to such a man. Then



there was a man who wanted a girl to search newspapers for something in the Museum: but that place was snapped up long before I had time to apply for it. Work is like the Pool, you know, that could only cure one person at a time."

"Patience, dear."

"I had no money for omnibuses, so I had to walk all the way. Yes, Miss Beatrice, I am already as patient as the most exacting preacher can desire." She hardly looked it with those eyes that flashed fire at the remembrance of the photographer, and the fingers that pulled the ribbon. "Patient? Yes. I am as patient as a man in the hands of the Inquisition. I am on the rack and I smile, you see"—but she did not smile. "Would you like to hear another day's experience? Yesterday, I heard of two places right away in the north of London. One was a place in a school. The lady principal received me frigidly and heard what I had to say, and told me that if the references were satisfactory I should receive twelve pounds a year for my mornings. Isn't it wonderful? Twelve pounds a year! Four shillings and eightpence a week! Allowing for holidays, five shillings a week!"

"Oh!" said Miss Beatrice. "It is really terrible."

"She said that I had left my afternoons and evenings, so that I could easily double my money. I asked her if she thought a woman could live on ten shillings a week, and she replied that she paid according to the market value. Well, then I tried the other place. It was a draper's shop. The man, who is a bully, wants a cashier. She is to work from nine in the morning till half-past eight at night, and is to have seven shillings and sixpence a week. So I left him without saying anything. He is a deacon of his chapel and the



chief support of the pastor, I was told. Dives was a draper who paid his cashier seven shillings and sixpence a week."

"My dear, you are greatly tired. But have patience still. With those who have patience and never lose their hold on faith and hope, everything comes right in the end. Look at us—my sister and myself—we have been very poor. Oh! we have suffered great privations and many humiliations. When we were young, I think that people were not so considerate and so kind towards their dependents as they have since—some of them—become."

"Not Dives the draper of Stoke Newington," said Lily.

"Often we had not enough to eat. But see what happened. We adopted what we call the simple life: we lived upon fruit and bread chiefly, and sometimes vegetables. So we were enabled to weather the most terrible storms of adversity, and now that we are grown old and glad to rest, Providence has sent us an annuity of fifty pounds a year, on which we can live in comfort and with thankful hearts. Patience, my dear."

"It will be such a long time before I get old." Lily sighed. "And there are all those storms to get through first. And perhaps the fifty pounds a year won't come along at all when it is most wanted. Very well, Miss Beatrice, I will try to be patient, I will indeed."

Then Miss Beatrice turned to Katie and kissed her.

"My dear," she said, "where there is no news, there is always hope."

"The natives have brought in reports that they are killed," Katie replied, with dry eyes. "Nobody thinks there is any room for hope. I went to the office of the paper to-day and saw one

of the assistant-editors. He is a kind man, and the tears came into his eyes. But he says it would be cruel to entertain any hope. Tom is dead! Tom is dead!"

Then she sprung to her feet and rushed out of the room.

"Don't follow her, Miss Beatrice," said Lily. "She will throw herself on the bed and cry. It will do her good, poor thing. It would do most of us good if we could lie down every evening for an hour or two and have a good cry."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### A Faithful Trustee.

IF, gentle reader, you are proposing to embark on a career of what the harsh world too readily calls crime and Judges reward with a term of seclusion, would you rather carry it on secretly or would you take your wife into partnership? It is a question which cannot be lightly answered, because the answer must depend in great measure on the character and disposition of the lady. For there are wives who, like eminent statesmen when they suddenly and brazenly veer round and give the lie to all that they have hitherto said and taught and professed, are ready to aver that the thing is the only right thing to do, and to cover it up with a gilding of fair words and pretence, so as to make it appear most beautiful, virtuous, and unselfish. Other wives there are, again, who can never be brought to see anything but the naked ugliness of the thing standing out in front of the written law, and refuse any assistance, and go melancholy and ashamed.

You will now hear, if you have the patience to follow up this narrative, what happened to a man who adopted a certain course of action without his wife's knowledge and consent previously obtained. I do not know, that is to say, what Harriet Rolfe would have said, or what co-operation she would have afforded her husband. Perhaps the path which opened out before him, showing such vistas of ease and delight, might have attracted and tempted her as well—but I do not know. Meantime it is a curious speculation to think of the difference it might have made had Harriet herself been a consenting party to the line adopted.

It was not a deep-laid conspiracy, hatched after long meditation and brooding. Not at all: it grew out of small beginnings, and was developed, as such things often are, by the assistance of unforeseen circumstances.

James Rolfe knew perfectly well that he would get nothing from his uncle's will, and was not in the least surprised when he learned its contents. The history of five years spent as an articled clerk in the office, and five more spent in acquiring experience at the cost of his patrimony, caused his uncle to resolve that his nephew should be left to make his own way in the world. This shows what a high opinion he had formed of this nephew. Further, on several occasions he communicated this opinion to James.

Therefore, when Tom proposed that he should prove the will and take over the management of the property, James considered it the greatest piece of luck which had ever befallen him.

At first, he sat down, the papers before him, with all the zeal which one expects of a man paid by the hour instead of by the job, without limit as to time. He began by investigating the cir-

cumstances connected with the trust-money, something of which he already knew.

Next, he made, as he thought, the discovery that the whole estate was not more than sufficient to discharge the trust.

He communicated this unpleasant discovery to Tom as a fact about which there was no doubt. It had the immediate effect of causing Tom's departure for Egypt. If it had not been for that discovery the second chapter of this book—nay, the whole book—would have been impossible for a truthful historian.

Now, at school, the youthful James had never been able to add up his sums and to reduce his pounds to pence with the correctness desired by his masters. The immediate result was unpleasant: the more enduring result was hatred and continued ignorance of all mathematical science. Therefore, as an accountant, he blundered. And it was not until Tom was gone that he found out what a big blunder he had made. Never mind: when he returned there would be time to set him right.

Six weeks after his departure there came the first alarming telegram in the papers.

James Rolfe read it and changed colour. Then he reflected and winked hard with both eyes. In moments of mental agitation he always winked hard and tight with both eyes. Some men turn red or pale or both; others fidget with their hands; others wriggle in their chairs; James Rolfe winked with both eyes.

The next day and the next and the day after there came more telegrams of a similar character.

"Harriet," said her husband solemnly, "my cousin Tom must be dead. Four days have passed and he has not come back. The last fugitives who have escaped have returned to camp, but he has

not come in. Captain McLaughlin of the 115th and Mr. Addison, correspondent of the *Daily Herald*, are still missing. There is no doubt, I very much fear, that Tom is dead."

"Then who'll have all the money, James?"

"There may be a will," he replied, fully aware that there was none. "It ought to be mine by rights. But there may be a will."

"What other relations has he?"

"He has cousins by his mother's side, but the family all went to New Zealand long ago. By his father's side I am the only first cousin."

"Then—oh! Jem, won't you have it all?"

"We must distinguish, Harriet," he replied in a legal tone, "we must distinguish. I certainly ought to have it all."

"He was engaged, you told me."

"Yes." James was reminded by the question of certain last words and a promise. And again he winked with both eyes. "Yes, he was engaged. I shall look into his papers, Harriet, and find his will, if he left one."

His heart leaped up within him and his pulse quickened, because he knew very well that there was no will.

The time was one of great tightness. The rent was overdue, and the landlord was pressing. James Rolfe's private resources had well-nigh come to an end. And his practice was meagre indeed. It is not enough, as many have discovered, to call yourself a solicitor, if your language, your manners, your appearance, and your general reputation fail to command the respect and confidence which bring along the client. James's appearance reminded the observer of a swashbuckler in private modern dress. Now, rightly or wrongly, people like their solicitors to exhibit a correct and sober tenue. His tastes led

him to racing and therefore to billiards, the turf being somehow the first cousin of the billiard-table. Both are green, to begin with. He was well set up; a big, handsome fellow, with brown hair straight and short, a smooth cheek, and a full moustache; the kind of man who at forty will have developed a figure and put on a double chin. His wife, whom he elevated to that proud position from a stall in Soho Bazaar, was, like himself, big-limbed, full of figure, and comely to look upon. There was no woman anywhere, Jem proudly felt, who could compare with her. In fact, when Harriet was well dressed and in a good temper she was a very handsome creature indeed. She would make a splendid stage queen with her masses of brown hair rolled up under a gleaming gold coronet, a black or crimson velvet dress showing her white arms and setting off her regular features and her ample rosy cheek, her broad white shoulders and her great blue eyes. Rubens would have painted her with enthusiasm. She must have come from the country, for in London such women are not grown. In other things, besides comeliness, she was a fitting partner for James Rolfe: like him, she ardently loved all the pomps and vanities of the world—every one—and especially the vanity of rich and beautiful raiment. Next, she loved the vanity of the theatre, which she regarded as the proper place to show a good dress. She also loved the vanity of champagne, the festal drink; that of good eating; and that of cheerful society, where the men did what they pleased and the ladies were not stuck-up and stiff.

“Harriet,” said her husband a few days later, “Tom is really dead. There can be no longer any doubt about it.”

“Is it really and truly certain?”



"Everybody has given him up."

"Oh, Jem—and all this money! Is it really ours? Oh!"

Jem did not immediately reply, but he shut both eyes hard. Then he walked to the window, and looked out into the back-garden of the villa. Then he returned to the fireplace and played with the things on the mantel-shelf. Harriet waited, and watched him anxiously.

"Harriet," he said, "I am his cousin and his solicitor. I have therefore been to his lodgings this afternoon and paid the rent, and carried away his books and papers and clothes and everything."

"Well?"

"So far as I have gone—I have examined all the papers, which did not take long—I have found no will."

"Then—oh, Jem,"—Harriet sprang to her feet—"everything is ours!"

"Don't be in a hurry. There may be a will. The property can only be ours if there is no will, because Tom would certainly have given it to that girl."

Harriet sank back in her chair.

"I thought," her husband continued, "before he went away that there would be no money after all."

"No money? Why? With all your uncle's fortune!"

"Because it seemed at one time as if there were liabilities that would swallow up all. Why should he make a will when he had nothing to leave? There was not even an insurance: there is next to nothing in the bank: there are his books, but what are they worth?"

"No will, you think, Tom? Then——"

"No will, I am nearly sure. But for the present we cannot be absolutely certain."



"But then, he may not be dead after all."

"For my own part, I have been certain from the beginning that he is dead. The party were surrounded and attacked. A few escaped. When the place was visited again the other day there were nothing but the skeletons left. I have no doubt at all that he is killed."

"Oh!" It was a long and rapturous interjection. "Are you sure, Jem? Oh! And no will! Can no one take the property away from us?"

"There is no will, Harriet. It will be all mine." He spoke with an authority which commanded faith.

"How much is it, Jem? Oh, tell me how much it is!"

"There's a house in Russell Square, beautifully furnished, where my uncle lived."

"Oh! but there's more than a house."

"There is property of all kinds—freehold houses, lands, investments—which come to, we'll say, fifteen hundred a year, I daresay. Harriet, we'll go at once and live in Russell Square."

"We will, Jem."

"We'll give up this measly little villa."

"We will—oh! we will; and Jem—dear Jem—promise me you won't play ducks and drakes with this money as you did with your own."

"No, my dear, I will not. I've done with betting, don't you fear. It's all over, Harriet. And I say, old girl, we've had our little tiffs about the money, and I own we have been hard up once or twice."

"Once or twice only? It seems to me that it's been nothing but a stand-up fight ever since we got married. Hardly a day but I wished myself back at my stall in Soho Bazaar. Once or twice! And you led me to believe that you were so well off."

"Well, Harriet, I was in love, you know. But that's all over, and what I wanted to say was that it's all to be forgotten now, just as we shall sink the stall when we go into Society and take our proper place."

"Poor Tom Addison!" she sighed. "I shall put on mourning for six months—not crape, of course, because I hate it—but half-mourning for six months. Half-mourning is always becoming. Poor Tom Addison! And I shall always be sorry that I never saw him. I could have grieved for him so much more truly if I had ever known him."

"Oh! never mind that," said her husband brutally. "Sit down and enjoy a good cry over him, just as if you had known him. You'd like him back again, wouldn't you? Nothing we should either of us like better."

"Don't, Jem. Of course it makes a wonderful difference to us. But we may have our feelings, and there's a proper way of talking about things."

"Feel away," Jem grinned, "and talk as much as you like, but don't talk him back again. Yes, you can talk, I know, as well as the tinker who talked off the donkey's hind leg."

"Then there is that poor dear girl who was engaged to him. What's become of her? I wish I'd known her too. I could have called upon her and condoled with her—in black silk."

"She is a governess somewhere, I believe. It's rough on her, isn't it? I hope she'll get another lover."

"Lovers are not to be had for the asking, Jem. There's not enough to go round, as everybody knows, and very few girls get more than one chance; unless, of course, they are more than commonly attractive." She smiled, feeling herself to be one of the exceptions.

This conversation makes the residence of Mr. and Mrs. James Rolfe in Russell Square intelligible. It also explains why Mr. James Rolfe sat every day in his uncle's office in New Square, Lincoln's Inn, his own name being put up instead of his uncle's, and there carried on his business.

When James Rolfe was an articled clerk there came to the office once a quarter, to receive on each occasion the sum of seventy-five pounds, in five-pound notes, a gentleman named Captain Willoughby. He was an elderly man of distinguished appearance and excellent manners. The senior clerk received him, gave him his money and took his receipt. The whole business did not take more than five minutes. On the last quarter-day of March, commonly called Lady-day, Captain Willoughby had not called for his money.

James was in no hurry to find out what had become of this man and who were his heirs. Indeed, he was at first fully occupied in mastering the details of a complicated estate, and it must be owned that he was not good at mastering details. Presently, things becoming a little clearer, he began to enquire further into this matter, and he discovered several curious and interesting things; namely, first, that no message or intelligence had come to the office concerning Captain Willoughby; secondly, that no person had sent in any claim as heir; thirdly, that no one had enquired after the Trust; and fourthly, that Captain Willoughby's address was unknown. It was strange that if the man was dead his heirs did not come forward. The mystery of this Trust began to worry him. Where were Captain Willoughby's heirs? Was he really dead? If so, why had no news been sent to the office?

"The trust-money," he said, presenting the case to himself, "was given to my uncle. Here is

Miss Willoughby's letter in the safe: 'Give my nephew three hundred a year, and let the rest accumulate for his children if he marries.' And here is the deed which my uncle drew up to secure the carrying out of the Trust. The nephew did marry: there's my uncle's note at the back of the letter. He married an actress and she died. Had he any children? I don't know. If he had, let them come and take their money. They must know where their father came for his. If there are no children, the money reverts to Miss Willoughby's heirs. Well, let them come and claim it. There is nothing to prove the Trust but this one letter and the deed. They may have a copy, but it isn't likely, or I should have heard of it by this time. Besides, Miss Willoughby died seven years ago; her will has long since been proved and her money paid over by my uncle, her executor, to her heirs, and not a word said about the Trust in her will."

You now begin to understand what it was that James Rolfe did. First, he constituted himself sole heir. If anything, he said, should be left after the Trust was paid, it could be divided among all the cousins if they came to claim it. Until they should claim their share he would continue to take and enjoy the whole.

Next, he said nothing to his wife about the Trust: he did not endeavour to find out if Captain Willoughby left any children, nor did he acquaint the heirs of Miss Willoughby with the facts.

As for his promise as regards Katharine, he put that away in a corner of his brain where it was not likely to disturb him. And he told his wife nothing of that promise, any more than of the trust-money.

Conscience sometimes makes dreadful ghosts to appear in the dead of night and whisper terrifying

things in the ears of some solicitors who do these things. In James Rolfe's case there were no ghosts at all. Conscience acquiesced. He slept beside his handsome Harriet the sleep of the just and righteous. No one knew about the Trust: there was, to be sure, the letter in the safe with the deed, but the key of this safe was in his pocket. No one knew about the Trust or about his promise as regards Katharine—ridiculous, to think that he was going to give that girl his uncle's estate! No one knew except Tom Addison and himself; and Tom was dead.

If he had told Harriet the exact truth, she might perhaps have insisted on the restitution of the trust-money to Miss Willoughby's heirs and she might have proposed a compromise as regards Katharine. On the other hand, she might have acquiesced in her husband's proceedings and even given him assistance and a moral support. Who knows? But he did not tell her, and she continued, happy in her great house, for the first time in her life free from worry; now her husband was rich there would be no more trouble. Of course he was honest. Honest? The doubt could not arise. A gentleman is always honest—who ever heard of a gentleman being a rogue and a robber of orphans?

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## CHAPTER V.

Katie.

**T**OM was dead. The worst misfortune that could happen to any girl had fallen upon Katie. She had lost her lover. In modern warfare the War Correspondent runs more risks than the warrior. The latter only takes his turn in the fighting: the former must be

always in the front: the combatants are looked after and kept in safety: they are like the pawns of a chess-board, moved from cover to cover: the correspondent has to find his own cover. The earlier War Correspondent had to keep in the rear with the camp followers and the commissariat: he picked up what information he could gather, an object of much suspicion and some contempt. He now marches with the van, goes out with the forlorn hope, sits down in the thick of the fight with his note-book, and takes ten men's share of the bullets. Consequently he sometimes gets picked off.

The hope that the two missing Englishmen might return was never strong, and grew daily more faint, until it finally vanished quite. They were dead. There could be no longer any doubt. From the great grey desert there came no more news or message from the dead, than comes across the broad silent ocean from the shipwrecked sailor whose craft has gone down beneath his feet. Even the men of the Savage Club, a truly hopeful and remarkably cheerful body, among whom are many War Correspondents, men of peril and daring, gave up pretending to hope any longer—Tom Addison, one of the best of good fellows, was dead.

It is good, if you come to think of it, even at the first amazement and stupefaction of grief, to be obliged to go on working as if nothing had happened at all. The old commonplace about the clown who has to tumble and grin while his wife lies sick unto death, may just as well be put away and done with; first, because clowns are not as a rule, I believe, so sensitive a folk as to suffer their emotions to hinder necessary work; and secondly, because the business of making other people laugh by horse-play is in itself serious, not mirthful,



and therefore compatible with the saddest heart; and thirdly, because, if the clown was of a more than commonly feeling disposition and if his business really required a mirthful heart, it would be good for him to be taken out of himself and his grief for awhile. Katie had a much more difficult duty than that of any clown: she had to go governessing. You must not look glum before children: you must not cry in their presence: you must not suffer your face to relax into gloom for a moment: yet your smile must not be fixed as of cast-iron: you must laugh with them, play with them, chat with them, and pretend so well as not to be found out or even suspected. All the time that you are with children you must put any private sorrows of your own away and out of sight.

The governess who knows nothing and is only amiable and kind to the children, with a leaning in the direction of religion, is rapidly dying out: the march of civilisation tramples upon her. The High Schools and the Cambridge colleges are making her existence impossible. Therefore Katie was happy in having obtained a post as governess in the simple and unpretending family of the Emptages.

They lived in Doughty Street, where they occupied the lower part of the house—that part which commands the kitchen. There were six children, all girls; the youngest was six and the eldest fifteen, and they were all Katie's pupils. The bread-winner was a clerk in the City: he had, I do really believe, all the virtues of his profession: not one or two, but all: they are too many to enumerate: suffice it to say that he wrote like copper-plate and kept books with accuracy; was as punctual as the clock; never wanted any amusement; did not smoke tobacco; drank a half-



pint of beer with his dinner and another with his supper; walked into the City and out again—he had walked in and out for thirty years, being now five-and-forty; and his salary now reached the very handsome figure of three hundred, at which point it would remain. His father was a clerk before him: his brothers and uncles and cousins and nephews were clerks: his wife was the daughter of a clerk: he was steeped in clerkery. In appearance he was neat, clean, small and spare, with a modest whisker of black hair: he had ventured to become as bald in front as if he were a partner: he believed that he had attained to a really lofty elevation on the social ladder—certainly, there were fewer above than below him: and he considered his career a remarkable example of what may be effected by ability backed by industry and honesty.

His wife was small and neat like him, but she looked much more worn, because to keep six children neat and respectable, is work of an even more responsible character than that of a clerk in a City house. I suppose there was nowhere a harder-worked woman, and, fortunately for her governess, there was nowhere a kinder-hearted woman.

Katie began her duties at nine, and she left the house at seven, eight, or nine in the evening, for there was no limit as to hours. She received, in payment for her services, her dinner—it really is a shame that the same word has to do duty for all the various functions of eating which take place between noon and night—and her tea. In addition, she was paid quarterly the sum of twenty pounds a year. This is rather more than a shilling a day—in fact, seven shillings and eightpence farthing a week. It is a great deal of money for a clerk on three hundred a year to pay a governess, but then it

released his wife and saved a nurse and allowed the girls to be fitted for those occupations which are open to genteel young persons for whom the Board school could not be thought of—and at any genteel Ladies' Seminary the education of all the six would cost a good deal more than twenty pounds a year. Katie's pay, to look at her side of the bargain after paying for her bed and breakfast, left her a little over two shillings a week for dress, gloves, boots, books, omnibuses, and amusements, and everything. A noble margin! Yet until the news came from Egypt she was perfectly happy. What matter for a few weeks of pinching when her lover would come home again and take her out of it? She gave herself up therefore cheerfully to the children, teaching them all the morning, walking with them, amusing them, making and mending and darning with them and for them, bearing a hand in laying the cloth, and in short behaving as the mother's help rather than the lady governess, in-so-much that she was become the sister of the children and the daughter of the mother, who held out her arms to her in her trouble—they were thin arms, worn to the bone with work for her children—and kissed her, and wept over and with her whenever they could both spare five minutes from their work. It is a good thing, I repeat, for the mourner to get up, brush out the ashes from his hair, sew up the rent garments—Katie's two shillings a week allowed of no rending—and go to work again, though the clay-clods upon the dead man's grave are still wet, and though his voice yet lingers in the brain, and though he is still expected to lift the latch and take his accustomed seat.

Katie went on with her teaching. In losing her lover she lost everything. His death—though this she understood not, mercifully—condemned

her to a life-long struggle for daily bread. These life sentences are always being passed, and generally upon the innocent. The father makes an Ass of himself, or Fate cuts him off prematurely. The sentence of the Court is that the girls shall be sent into penal servitude for life as under-paid, half-fed, incompetent teachers, wretched artists, miserable literary hacks, and so forth. Happily, the decrees of the Court are not published. If the girls were to understand what lies before them—the loveless, hopeless, dependent, and starved life—one knows not whither they would turn in the misery of the prospect before them. The twenties, when one is hopeful, pass into the thirties when one is strong still, and the thirties into the forties when the strength of youth has changed into endurance; and presently age falls upon them and it grows daily more difficult to find work, and in the end they come to understand their own history and the hopelessness of their case all along and the severity of the Law. Poor ladies! who can help them? Who can take them out of Harley House?

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## CHAPTER VI.

Dittmer Bock.

**T**HERE is not much society for families such as this of Doughty Square: friends and relations of course there are; but there is little hospitality, and one cannot expect much visiting when the ladies of the household are occupied all day long in keeping the family neat and respectable to outward show. The theatre, with an order to the Upper Circle, is the most desired form of female

recreation. Nevertheless, the Emptages had one regular and even constant visitor. He came every evening and smoked a cigar—of Hamburg manufacture—and conversed with Mr. Emptage and the ladies. He came at first with the view of improving his English by conversation. but, it must be confessed, he now came chiefly for the purpose of conversing with Katie.

He was a young German, named Dittmer Bock. He conducted correspondence for the House which also employed Mr. Emptage, in many foreign languages: he wrote letters and took down instructions in shorthand: he drew forty pounds a year: he lived upon that salary; and he presented the appearance of one who lived upon four times that salary. The young Germans who come to London in the day of small things practise the small economies: they share bedrooms: they know where to go for meals of a satisfying kind, large in bulk to satisfy the Teutonic hunger, but cheap. Eighteen pence a day is considered, by some of the younger adventurers, as an ample allowance for food: for everything not absolutely necessary, a German who means to rise must wait. Dittmer was a sturdy, well-set-up young fellow, actually without spectacles. He had the blue eyes and the fair hair of his country: his manners were gentle: he firmly believed in the enormous superiority of Germans over the rest of mankind. He loved dancing, though he got none; he could sing, playing his own accompaniments, the folk-songs of which the good German never tires: he sang them with great feeling: and in the evening when the largest lamp was lit—the gas-lamp—and the children, with Mrs. Emptage and Katie, sat at the table sewing, and Mr. Emptage sat by the fireside, his legs crossed, with an evening paper, enjoying the leisure of a gentleman who

has put away care for the day, it was pretty to see Dittmer spreading his fingers over the keys and to listen while he warbled, one after the other, the ditties of the Fatherland.

It became the custom with the young man when Katie stayed until nine—no one could stay later, because that was the time for the family supper—to walk home with her as far as the door of Harley House.

English young men as well as Germans ardently desire to tell about themselves, their prospects, their aims and their ambitions, but they stifle the yearning. They talk to each other for awhile, but not after their career is actually begun. A German young man, on the other hand, looks about for a companion of the opposite sex, to whom he may confide everything: she becomes his friend, his adviser, his sympathiser. Sometimes she is young and pretty, when the result is inevitable: sometimes she is young and plain, when the result is generally much the same: sometimes she is middle-aged or old, when the friendship may become a very sweet and tender one. How much good might be done, if ladies of a certain age would let it be known that they were ready to undertake the part of consoler, adviser, and sympathiser each to one young man! One feels, speaking as a man, perfectly ready at any age to do as much for a young lady. Katie played this part to the young German, while he talked about himself.

"I am not, *Fraülein*," Dittmer Bock explained, "*hochgeborne*. My father conducts a *Delikatesen-Handlung* in Hamburg, opposite the *Jacobi Church*." May one disguise the good Dittmer's English? Anyone may speak it as he spoke it. In fact, the German-English of to-day is as easy to write as the French-English of sixty years ago



—witness the humourist in every American paper. “My father had ambitions for his sons above the *Delikatessen-Handlung*. He wished that they should become great merchants, such as used to be found in London.”

“Are they not found here still?”

Dittmer shrugged his shoulders. “I find the memory of great English merchants, and I find great German houses—Hamburg is the place where you must look now for great merchants. Did you ever hear of the Godefroi brothers?”

Katie never had.

“They were boys who worked and looked about them. Perhaps they had read history, and knew about Whittington and Gresham. And they rose and became rich; they discovered an island, and they established trade with it and planted it. They became rich. They founded the great German Colonial Empire of the future”—here Dittmer spread his arms—“which will grow and grow until it swallows up your English Colonies one after the other. I, too, shall look about the world until I discover another island like Samoa. Then I shall go there and begin to trade and to plant.”

“It is a great ambition, Dittmer.”

“It has been my resolve since I was a child. In order to carry it out I have learnt what I could—mathematics, languages, book-keeping, shorthand, physical geography, commercial and political history, and the present condition of trade over all the world. I know every harbour and its exports and imports and the principal merchants who carry on its trade.”

“That seems a great deal to learn.”

“Modern trade wants all this knowledge. There will very soon be no more English merchants, because your young men will not learn the new



conditions of trade. In every office there must be clerks who can write and speak foreign languages. Your young men will not learn them, and your schools cannot teach them. Then we come over—we who have learned them. For my part, I can write and read English, Swedish, Danish, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, and German. Do you think we shall be content to stay here as clerks? No—no. Do you think that I have come here to sit down with forty pounds a year? We are cheap, we German clerks. You say so. Mein Gott! you will find us dear. We are learning your trade: we find out all your customers and your correspondents: we learn your profits and we undersell you. We do not go away. We remain. And presently, instead of an English House there is a German House in its place, because your young men are so stupid that they will not learn.”

At this point Dittmer Bock was quite carried away and became almost the American newspaper German.

“I study English commerce—I study how it began and why it is now coming to an end. The English clerk will not learn anything and expect to be paid like an Amstrichter at least. In Deutschland we learn, and we are poor at first. Jawohl! we are poor, but we can wait. It is your high salaries in your army, in your navy, in your Church, in your trade, in your Administration, which ruins Great Britain. Everywhere the German merchant drives out the Englishman and the American: your commerce goes out of your hands: for the moment only it remains in London, thanks to the Germans and the Jews. When we have taken Antwerp, it will all go there—all—and where will be your London then? All—all shall be Deutsch . . .” Then he fell into a philosophical vein.

"Let us look around. Already France decays—for want of men: England has begun to decay, for there will soon be no more bauer, no villagers, for soldiers and to make strong and pure the bad blood of the towns. Deutschland alone will spread until it has swallowed Holland, Belgium, Scandinavia, and India and the English Colonies, and has controlled America. There will be only three nations left in the world—Deutschland, Russia, China. Will there be one grand world kingdom, with Berlin for its world centre? Always we see, in history, commerce which passes from hand to hand: everywhere one people which decays and one people which advances. It is curious; it is wonderful."

"But all this will be after your time, Dittmer."

"As for me," he answered, coming down from the prophetic level, "I shall become another Godefroi, and find another Samoa."

"I hope you will, Dittmer," said Katie.

"Fraülein"—he left off talking about himself—"my heart is sorrowful for you. Every day I tear open the paper and I look for news. I say, Oh! perhaps to-day it comes—the telegram that he is well."

"Dittmer, please stop. Please—do not say such a thing again."

"But there is hope, since they have learned nothing about him."

"How can there be hope? No—he is dead. I have his letters. I shall carry them all my life." Involuntarily she laid her hand upon the pocket where they were kept. "The letters are all I have of him. He is dead, Dittmer. And, oh! my heart is breaking. Never speak again of news. There can be none, unless they find his bones upon the sands. No news—no news. He is dead—he is dead."

They finished their walk in silence. When they reached Harley House, Katie saw that the tears were running down Dittmer's cheeks.

"You are good and kind, my friend," she said. "Oh! it is something to have a friend in the world."

He stooped and kissed her hand.

"Fraülein"—he began, but he choked and said no more. It is remarkable that although we boast ourselves to be the grand articulately-speaking race of Man, the most expressive things are those which are omitted. Dittmer Bock never finished that sentence, yet Katie knew what he meant, and that she had a servant as well as a friend.

One evening he had been silent and dull at the house, even refusing to sing. He spoke to her on another subject.

"Fraülein," he said, "there will be more trouble."

"What is it, Dittmer? Trouble for you or for me?"

"For our friends. Therefore, for you as well as for me."

"What is it, then?"

He proceeded to tell her, with many excuses and apologies to himself for betraying the confidence of the House, that in his position of confidential secretary and letter writer, he knew a great deal more than the clerks in the outer office knew; that the partners spoke more freely in his presence than before others: that in this way, and by putting things together, he had learned that owing to the depression of trade and the bad prospects of the future it was in contemplation to make a considerable reduction in the expenses of the establishment.

"What does that mean?"

"It may mean that Mr. Emptage will be sent away."

"Oh! that would be terrible for them."

"Or perhaps his salary would be reduced."

"But they are poor enough as it is."

"I shall be kept because I am cheap. They think I am cheap. Ho! The English clerks are sent away because they are dear, and because they know neither shorthand nor any foreign language, and never try to devise any way of extending the business. They are machines. What did I tell you, Fraülein? Is not London decaying when her young men will not learn the only things which will keep them from falling?"

"But what—oh! Dittmer, my friend—what will that poor woman with her six children do if her husband is dismissed?"

"I know not. Presently another German House may rise upon the ruins of an English House, The good Emptage is honest. He shall count the money in that House. And his daughters shall marry the planters in my Pacific Island."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### The Lost Place.

NO prophecies ever come true except prophecies of disaster. Perhaps the reason is that there have never been any other kind. Katie went about her duties with a sense of impending disaster due to Dittmer's prophecies. The children carried on in their usual fashion: the mother worked and contrived: the precise bald-headed father came home every day and read the paper slowly, with his legs crossed, just as usual: and yet something dreadful was going to happen to them.

If you knew that the day after to-morrow there was going to be an earthquake on so vast and extended a character that there would be no time to escape, would you warn the unthinking folk or would you leave them to their fate? If you warned them, for everyone who would betake him to his knees, a dozen would take to drink. Better leave them, unconscious, until the end came. As well warn the skipping lamb that in a day or two he will be hanging up with his wool gone and his inside scooped out, in a butcher's shop.

The blow fell a few days later.

It was on Saturday afternoon, when Mr. Emptage generally came home at half-past two and spent the rest of the day with the family, not disdaining to turn his hand to household jobs: few family men, indeed, were readier at nailing up a blind, mending a door-handle, or any of those little matters for which the plumber is too often called in. He generally came home cheerful and contented—tenuity of income is not felt if you desire no more than you have. This day, however, he returned in a condition which—unjustly, I declare—forced those who saw him to think of strong drink.

“John!” said his wife sharply. “What is the matter? Where have you been?”

His face was white, his lips were tremulous, his hands dangled at his side—a most undignified thing for hands to do—and he swayed from side to side.

“John!” his wife repeated. “What’s the matter?”

“He is ill, Mrs. Emptage,” said Katie. But she knew what had happened.

“Children!” the poor man groaned, “wife! Katie”—he sunk into an arm-chair and buried his face in his hands—“We are ruined!”

Had he, then, been dismissed?

"John! What is it? Tell me, quick. What? John! Speak up!"

"Maria, I will. Give me time. I've eaten no dinner to-day at all. What right had I to be eating dinner with the poor children never going perhaps to have any more?" He uttered these awful words with his face still in his hands, so that they had a muffled funeral sound like the drums at the burial of a soldier.

"Oh, John! Speak up!" his wife repeated.

The younger children began to cry. The elders watched their mother and Katie. It would not be becoming in them to begin the crying until they set the example. But they were terrified. John sat up and looked slowly and solemnly around shaking his head. His children were about him, his wife was at his side, and in front of him was the governess. Oh, how few of his contemporaries had governesses! And now he felt . . . In moments of great trouble it is the small thing which seizes first on the mind. John Emptage suffered less pain at the moment for the loss of his income than for the loss of his gentility. "Our governess! My children's governess!" Now, he would be able to say these words no more.

"Business," he began with a groan, "has been terribly bad. It is bad with everybody, but in our trade it seems to have gone altogether."

"Well, my dear, you have said that so often."

"At last, the partners have reduced the Establishment. Reduced—Reduced—the Establishment, Maria."

"John!" shrieked his wife, "you haven't lost your berth?"

"They've sent away half the clerks—three are gone; and they've cut down the salaries of those



who stay on. I'm cut down. Maria—children—your father has been cut down!”

“Oh, John! How much? Fifty pounds?”

“The chief partner sent for me. He spoke very kind. He said it was very hard on an old servant, but what was he to do? He said that all his personal expenses had been cut down to the lowest, and the Establishment in the City kept up in hope of better times, but the trade seemed gone away for good, and what was he to do? And then he said that he was very sorry indeed, very sorry for me he was, but he could no longer go on paying salaries on the same scale and he was obliged to offer me a reduction of”—John doubled up and groaned as one who has an internal pain—“of half my screw—take it or leave it—take it or leave it. That's all, Maria—take it or leave it.”

“Oh, John! Only half—that is what we married on, sixteen years ago. It was plenty then. But now . . .” she looked round her. Six children! And the eldest only fifteen! She groaned aloud.

Three hundred pounds a year does not seem to some people a great income: but many families have to make three hundred pounds suffice for all their wants and all their luxuries: think of the clergy, half-pay officers, and widows. In careful hands—nowhere are the hands more careful than those of the London clerk's wife—three hundred pounds will go a very long way, particularly when you can get such a governess as Katie—a chance which falls to few. But divide the three hundred by two—Mrs. Emptage rapidly made that division and gazed before her in consternation; some clerks certainly have to do with a hundred and fifty, even clerks with families of six. But none knew better than this cousin of a thousand clerks what the income meant.

"Oh! children," she cried, "what shall we do? The things that we must give up! How in the world shall I keep you respectable?"

Then she looked guiltily at Katie.

"You will not be able to keep me any longer," said Katie. "Oh! I am so sorry for you, I am, indeed."

"My dear." Mrs. Emptage embraced and kissed her, weeping. "And you in all your trouble too—oh! you, of all the world, to be sent away!"

And then the children lifted up their voices together, from Marie of fifteen to Elfie of six, and wept to think that Katie must go. And the poor clerk who had been so respectable and risen to such a height turned his face away and bewailed his fortune.

"Yes, I must go," said Katie. "Of course I understand that. Don't mind me, Mrs. Emptage. Maria is able to teach the children—or Agnes at a pinch, when Maria takes a situation. Let us sit down and talk over what can be done."

"Take it or leave it," the clerk continued. "That is what it came to after all the fine words. And yet he can't help himself. And clerks at a hundred a year can be picked up like blackberries. That's the sting of it. If you don't take it, another will do the work as well."

"No, John," said his wife, "not as well. I have lived among clerks all my life, and for handwriting, punctuality, and trustworthiness, there is no one in all London like you."

"Thank you, Maria." Oh, Woman the Consoler! "Perhaps there are not so many who can pretend to be a better clerk than your husband. But, my dear, Employers will put up with an inferior article if it's cheaper. I've heard a good deal of the clerks out of place and now it comes home to me. There's thousands of them walking

about the City going from office to office—ah! men with good character, besides the profligate and the idle—they say they are slowly starving to death from insufficient food. And how their wives and children live, if they've got any, God in Heaven only knows! It was take it or leave it. My dear, could I leave it with the thought of those poor creatures in my mind? Thousands there are, begging for anything, anything—and they can't get it. Take it or leave it! Why, there didn't want a minute's thought. 'I'll take it, sir,' I said, 'though it's hard at my age—but perhaps when times get better . . . ' 'I will, Emptage,' he says. 'If times improve, I will.' So, my dear, there's a promise."

"Ah! I thought there would be something, John. A promise. Times will get better!"

John shook his head.

"No. Times will get worse, I'm afraid, for English clerks. For now they all want shorthand and foreign languages. And the German clerks are coming over by hundreds to take the places that our poor fellows ought to have. Look at young Bock with his shorthand and all his languages—and his forty pounds a year! What chance have we against such competition as that?"

"Patience, John," said his wife. "Leave off crying, children. Katie, my dear, have one more meal with us, if it is only a cup of tea. Children, Katie will come and see us sometimes—won't you, my dear?"

When Katie came away at nine, she met Dittmer Bock smoking a Hamburg cigar under the lamp-post.

"They know all now," he said. "I was afraid to komm. I am sorry for them. Yet they have still one hundred and fifty pounds. In Hamburg that is a good pay for a clerk. One hundred and

fifty pounds. Three thousand marks. Count it in marks. So it is twenty times as great—ten marks a day—what cannot be done with ten marks a day? They have been too rich, the English. But they will be rich no longer. The English clerks are sent away. The German clerk remains. I have but forty pounds a year. Eight hundred marks. Yes, the German remains and the Englishman is sent away. It is the new conquest of England. The German remains.”

“I fear they will have to deny themselves in many things,” said Katie.

“They will eat enough—but they will no longer be rich. They will no longer have such a *Fraülein* to teach the children.”

“No. I must find another place.”

“It is sometimes hard to find—I fear—the other place.”

“I shall find it, somehow. Oh, I have no fear.”

“*Fraülein*,”—Dittmer turned pale, smitten with a sudden terror—“you leave this good family: you go away. Himmel! Where can I go to meet you now?”

Katharine hesitated.

“Do you still wish to meet me, Dittmer?” she asked, without the least coquetry.

“Ach! You ask if I still wish—what other pleasure have I than to meet you, *Fraülein*? There is no one else in the world who listens when I speak.”

“If it is only to tell me what is in your mind, I will try to arrange for seeing you sometimes. But——”

“*Fraülein*, it is sweet to open my soul to you, because you understand and are kind. You do not laugh. Ja! It fills my heart with joy to be with you and to see your face—so *wunderschön*——”

“Dittmer, you must not——”

"You ask if I still wish to meet you. Ach! And all the day, at my work, I see your beautiful eyes and hear your voice—so soft and sweet——"

"Dittmer,"—Katie laid her hand on his arm—"understand. I can never meet you again—unless you promise not to talk like that. Oh! Dittmer—I have his letters close against my heart—and—and—Dittmer, how *can* you talk to me like that?"

He made no reply, because the thing he would have wished to say was exactly the most calculated to prejudice him still further. He would have said, "Forget that man, Katie. He is dead and can feel no more. Think that you are young and beautiful, and made for love, and listen to the wooing of a gallant young clerk who means to become a great merchant and to have an island all his own in the Pacific."

"Good-bye, Herr Bock," said Katie. "We will part here."

Then he pulled himself together as in the presence of a great danger.

"Forgive me, Fraülein. I will be your brother and you shall be my sister. I will call you Kätchen, I will tell you all that is in my mind. Kätchen, will you consent?" He offered her his hand. She took it without hesitation.

"Dittmer," she said, "you shall be my brother as long as you please."

"And when I am rich and have found my island, you shall be the queen of the island if you like. If not you shall stay at home and be rich—with your brother. You shall have a robe of velvet and of silk—instead of stuff . . ."

She smiled sadly.

"Dittmer, it must always be a black robe, whether it is of silk or of stuff."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## The Chronicle of Wasted Time.

IN this way did Katie lose her situation and join the ranks of the multitude of ladies unemployed.

It is a great and a doleful multitude; nowhere can be seen such an array of rueful visages as where this crowd is assembled. It grows daily greater and more doleful, for reasons too various and too numerous to relate. It consists of all those women who, having been gently bred, and for the most part without expectation of labour, and therefore with no special training and no apprenticeship, find themselves, perhaps without the least warning, compelled to work for their living.

The army contains women of all ages, but mostly they are young—perhaps they are gifted with perpetual youth, which, being loveless, must be a mockery. Perhaps, in the great battles which they are always fighting against the allied troops of Poverty and Hunger, the elder ones get quickly killed. These ladies are the Amazons who offer themselves as recruits in the Army of Labour, but being undrilled and without discipline are either refused altogether or are else only taken on as auxiliaries liable to be discharged at a moment's warning. They may also be described as a Fringe hanging round every one of the Professions and Trades in which women may work. They give the most dreadful trouble to everyone actually trained, skilled and employed, for many reasons—but chiefly because they are all incompetent, every



one: if they were not incompetent, they would speedily leave these dismal ranks. Therefore whatever they try, which is everything, they do badly: and thus they lower the standard of good work: and because they are so miserably poor they have to take any pay; and so they lower wages, which is the beginning of all sorrows.

It is a truly dreadful thing to belong to the Ladies Unemployed. The hunt for work is with them exactly like the savage's hunt for food: it begins every morning: there is no respite: and it tends to produce among the ladies much the same effects as among the savages. Not with all women, it is true, but with some.

Miss Beatrice and her sister at Harley House went through the life without losing the womanly virtues. But it makes many girls hard, grasping, and unscrupulous; every one, like the savage, fighting for her own hand, hunting for her own food. It causes the tender-hearted to become pitiless; the unselfish to become selfish; the honest and truthful to practise ways that are tortuous; the necessities of life make them ready to underbid and to undersell each other; and send them by hundreds into the hungry jaws of sharks who live, like the Loathly Worm of old, upon the tender limbs of young maidens.

Two of these girls were talking together in a cubicle of Harley House. One of them stood in the doorway with joined hands, the other sat on the bed. The former had been six months longer among the Ladies Unemployed than the other; she was therefore wiser than her friend.

"I have averaged eight shillings a week," she said, "eight shillings a week. Katie, during the whole time that I have been trying to get work, I have never possessed more than a single sovereign at a time to put between me and starvation. Oh!

it is worse than the life of a slave, and there is no way out of it—not any way—except one, of course—and for that we have to wait so long.”

“Courage, Lily,” said the other, “you will find something presently.”

Lily shook her head impatiently.

“Well,” Katie went on, “I have fifteen pounds stored up. Think of that! Fifteen pounds! it ought to keep us for more than three months.”

“No, there are boots; you may go in rags if you can hide them, but you must have boots to wear, and they are frightfully dear. Besides, I am not going to be so mean as to take your money, Katie.”

“How rich I thought I was,” said Katie, “when Tom asked me before he went away if I had plenty of money, and I thought of my hoard of fifteen pounds and told him that I had no anxiety at all about money, and of course I hadn’t so long as I had my situation. And now he is dead,” Katie sighed. “And my place is lost. Lily, you must and shall share my money.”

“Oh, Katie, you will want it all.”

“My dear,” Katie took her hand and held it, “we must be sisters because of all the women in the world I do not think there are any other two so desolate and so friendless as we are.”

“I am sure there are not. I wonder what we have done to deserve it?”

“There cannot, surely, be two other girls in the world left without any friends or relations. Fancy not having a single cousin, to say nothing of father, mother, brother, or sister.”

“My father,” said Lily, with a touch of pride as if the thing showed dignity and independence, “always said that sooner than return to his relations he would sit down and starve.”

“Mine,” said Katie without any pride at all,

"refused to let me ever speak of my relations. You see, Lily, we must have cousins."

"And perhaps they are generous cousins who would help us—if we can be helped; but mine at least cannot be rich—I am sure they cannot be rich. When father was ill I forgot to ask him who they are and where they live."

"My father," said Katie carrying on the comparison, "would have told me, I suppose, where he got his money, but he fell down dead and had no time, poor dear!"

"What *have* we done to deserve it?"

"Lily, it is always what your father does: the responsibility of a man must be terrible; it isn't only the income for his own lifetime, it is the future of his children to the third and fourth generation that he has in his hands. I wonder if they ever think of it. I wonder if our fathers, Lily, ever thought of what would happen to their daughters, when they should die."

"Mine didn't. He thought about his invention and the man who stole it and made a fortune out of it. He brooded over it all the time."

"And mine thought about his club. Does it seem quite right that fathers should have such power? If one's father fails, down they all go, children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. If he succeeds, up they all go together, higher and higher."

"Unless they take to drink," said Lily wisely.

"If he fails, the girls have to look for work——"

"And not to find it."

"Unless," Katie continued, "they get married. And then there is the chance of another father failing."

"My dear, what is the use of talking about marriage in Harley House? Love and marriage cannot come in our way. How are we to make

the acquaintance of any men? Some of the girls at the Museum make acquaintances with the readers, but no good ever came of that sort of acquaintance, yet."

"But, Lily, anything may happen."

"Not out of books, unless it is bad—in real life everything happens that is bad. But as for love and marriage—I declare, Katie, that if we had our hair cut off and were shut up in a Spanish convent, a hundred miles from any man, we should have a better chance of marrying than we have here—I mean we two, who have no friends at all. Not the rest of the girls, who have brothers and can go out with them."

"I have had my chance, Lily, and I have been robbed of it," said Katie.

"Yes, whatever happens you will be the happier for having been loved. It is something to remember always. Oh! it must be a wonderful thing to feel that a man is going to give up all his life—all his work—to make you happy and keep you in ease and comfort. It must be such a happiness just to feel it, as you did, for a month or two, that even to think of it makes me go mad with rage at the cruel fate which keeps us locked up here out of the way of it, so that we can never, never meet with it."

"Yes," said Katie, "it is a wonderful thing to feel. There is no other happiness to compare with it—and I have felt it. Oh!" she clasped her hands, "I have felt it!"

"Katie, when I am tramping the streets from one place to another, knowing beforehand that I shall be too late, a terrible picture arises before my mind, a dreadful nightmare which comes by day: and I see my future life stretched out before me plain and clear—perhaps yours, dear, as well, but I hope—yes—I hope that God will take you first."

"Oh, Lily!"

"I must—I cannot help it—I must speak! The picture comes of itself and stays before my eyes, and I must tell somebody. Katie, I see myself going on like this for year after year—all my life."

The girl's dark eyes glowed and grew larger as she gazed intently upon the panoramic picture which rolled itself out before her. As she spoke it became real to Katie as well.

"Oh! such a long life—I shall live to eighty. There will be no change at all until the time comes when no one will give me any work to do at all. And then I shall go to the workhouse. I am always applying for places. Sometimes I get taken on, but generally I am too late. Always jostling and pushing and fighting with other women. What a life! It is yours as well as mine. What a fortune for us to be born with!"

"Lily, some change will come. It must come!"

"No—never any change. Look at poor old Miss Stidolph. She is sixty, at least: and she is no better off than when she began—thirty years ago and more, after her father failed—to go out as a daily governess. What change has ever come to her? Look at Miss Augusta and Miss Beatrice: to be sure, they've got fifty pounds a year to live upon now. Before it came they were starving. And their father was a Canon of a Cathedral. What a life they have led! No, Katie, for us and those like us there is no hope—none. I declare, Katie, that if there were any way of escape—any—offered me, I would take it."

She looked about her like a prisoner in a cell and gasped as if for want of air.

"Lily!"

"Never enough money," she went on; "never enough food; never enough dress; never any society at all. What a life it is that lies before

us! You are twenty-one, and I am twenty-two. Perhaps fifty or sixty years of it. And oh! how slowly the hands move round the clock! Oh! how slowly the sun goes down!"

"Lily, you have no right to assume that things will go on just as they are doing at present."

"No. They may be worse. Katie, is it right that girls should be treated so? We are born with the same desire for happiness as other girls. We could enjoy, like them, beautiful things and lives of ease. And oh! look at us. There is not a single lady in this great town who invites either of us to her house: there is no chance of meeting a gentleman unless it is the kind of gentleman who speaks to girls in the street: Happiness! What does it mean? We do not know what it means. We are sentenced."

Katie sighed heavily.

"What good is it to rebel?" she asked. "Let us accept our lot and make what we can out of it. What can we do more, in the way of work?"

"I should like to do nothing. We were made to do nothing. That is why women are not able to lift anything and to fight. It is the business of men to work and of women to sit down and enjoy the fruits of their labours. Besides, men like work—and women don't."

"What can we do, however?"

"I can do nothing. I never was taught to do anything. None of us were."

"Well, but——"

"I can copy, I think, that is all I am really fit for. I can copy documents and I can go to the Museum and make extracts. I can also search. I don't suppose," she added with candour, "that I should ever find anything, but I could try, if anyone wanted me to find anything. Some girls



seem always able to get search-work to do. But then I know nobody, and have got no interest. And oh! how many there are who are trying to get the work!"

"You can teach, Lily."

"No," her black eyes, which had been heavy and sad, flashed with anger. "No—I can not and will not teach. I *hate* teaching. I loathe teaching. I want to kill the children: they drive me to madness. The last time I tried teaching I ran away from the place, or I should have done something dreadful. Fortunately, I don't know anything. I can't add up and divide. I can't tell you the capital of any country and I do not remember a single date. And I've forgotten all the Kings of Israel. Katie, I would rather make button-holes for shirts than teach."

"Well, dear, there are other things."

"I could do clerk's work, but no one will have me. I could write letters."

"Let us be hopeful, Lily. You are very pretty, and perhaps—who can tell? As for me, that is all over; but you—Lily, are you sure you have no relations?"

"I know of none. My father came to London from the North. But I don't know where. He brought his invention with him, but somebody stole it from him and then he became a clerk. He lived a moody and a lonely life and he made no friends, but he always hoped to make another invention."

"What was his invention?"

"I don't know. Something to do with machines. My father was always making pictures of wheels. I have no friends and no money. What have I done, I ask again?"

"It isn't what we have done, dear, I told you: it is what our fathers did."

Lily made as if she would say something really severe but she refrained.

"Well," she said mildly, "to-morrow you will begin the round. I only hope"—she said this as one who has no hope—"that you will be more lucky than I have been."

Then the other residents began to come upstairs, and Lily retired to her own cubicle and they all went to bed.

In the night, that Vision of a long and hopeless life of Insufficiency arose before Katie and rolled itself out scene by scene like a never-ending panorama. It was one of those nightmares which do not cease when one awakes, sits up, shakes the pillow, and turns over on the other side. This kind remains, and the moment you go to sleep again the story is carried on from the point where it was stopped by the waking. There was once a man who had a nightmare of this kind which came every night and carried on the story slowly, hour by hour, minute by minute—so that he lived two lives, one by night and one by day. His tombstone—he died young—says nothing about his nocturnal career: it says he was a good husband, a kind father, and a straight-walking Christian. Ah! and how about the other life? Katie saw herself tramping about in search of work and finding none. She was always hungry: her clothes were always shabby: gloom and despair weighed upon her soul: hopelessness crept over her like a paralysis: she saw her youth and her strength slipping away: she saw the lines in her wasted cheek—which Tom once loved so much and thought so beautiful. Then she saw how she had grown old and was just as poor as ever and work was just as necessary to her, but it was all given to the younger ones. Lastly, she found herself with no money at all. And an

awful terror—such a terror as she had never before experienced: as if now, at last, everything was over: as if there were no God in the Heavens; or if there were, that He had turned His face from her for ever: she could not pray: to look forward was more dreadful than to look back: how terrible, how dreadful a thing is old age in poverty and want, and without the stay and consolation of Christian hope! Then in her dream she crept friendless and destitute into the streets. Oh! Tom—Tom! was it for this that you perished upon the Egyptian sands? Then she awoke with a sob. Lo! it was morning, and the sun shone upon the windows—even upon the windows of Harley House.

Would you follow these two girls in their quest of work and bread?

It was a hopeless quest, because the things that they could do were so few and there were already so many girls to do them, and they had no friends or private interest. All that Katie could do well was to undertake the teaching and care of young children, or of those girls with parents to whom the curriculum of the High School does not appeal. She could bring to her task, as she had done with the Emptage children, affection and care such as one hardly has a right to expect for ten times the salary. Alas! she found that for one place there were fifty candidates. And like Lily she was always too late.

In the months of July and August young and old alike dream of green fields, of woods where the shadows are deep and cool, of the sea-shore where the fresh breezes roll up the blue waves into light bracken upon the shingle, of rocks with deep pools and dark cool caves. It is hard in these months to be seeking for work and finding none, while the streets smell like a bakery whose windows

have not been opened for weeks, and the reflected heat mounts up and strikes your cheeks as with a hot hammer, and the air of the great town seems used up by the breathing of all the millions, and there is no refreshment by day or night, and one cannot afford fruit and ice, and the only place you have got for the evening is hot and close and filled with depressed and melancholy women. Katie sat there, among the rest, sad and weary, though Miss Beatrice sat beside her and held her hand, whispering words of consolation and patience, and Miss Augusta played solemn music. As for Lily, she came no longer to the drawing-room: she had taken a lowly position as figurante in a melodrama: she went to the theatre every night and stood in the front, being a pretty girl, and received fifteen shillings a week. The work and the place and the surroundings were not exactly what a careful mother would choose for her child: but, careful mothers, reflect that if your child must work, she cannot always choose her work and her reputation will have to depend upon herself and not upon the safeguards and precautions arranged for her by her friends. It is, indeed, the first condition of woman's work that these safeguards must be abandoned.

Lily was on the boards, but Katie could get nothing to do. She should have remembered that July, August, and September are the worst months in the year for a daily governess looking after work. But she did not: and she thought continually of her dreadful dream and of Lily's picture of the long and miserable life.

A girl who has a profession—even if it be only that of nursery governess—always makes a mistake if she leaves it. Katie made that mistake. She left her profession and went to the Reading Room of the British Museum instead.

Here, besides the men who study and the authors who write and those who hunt into obscure things and clear up doubtful points, sit the girls who go there in search of work. The attendants know them: the Superintendent of the room knows them: they are known to each other. They copy, as Lily had done: they hunt up passages and write them out: they search in old magazines: they find out things for leader-writers, reviewers, authors, members of Parliament, and men who want to write articles of the thoughtful and practical kind, and have not time to get at the facts: some of them are so clever in the arrangement and orderly display of the facts that the article is well-nigh written when the work leaves their hands: but I never heard that their name appeared at the end of it. Some of them translate from French, German, or Italian; some, the cleverer among them, assist journalists with bits of London letters for Colonial papers, work up Fashion columns, do papers for magazines if they can get them in: and write stories. Yes: unfortunately for the Art of Fiction, the rules of which they have never studied, they write stories.

There is a great deal of work done in the reading-room, but then there are so many to take it and the pay is so little. Katie joined this band. She could not write stories or articles: she had no literary ability at all: she ought never to have entered the Reading Room.

If a girl is so clever as by dint of hard work, clear head, and determination to force herself across the line which separates the amateur from the professional, she will get out of this dreadful land of wailing and of wringing of hands, where the women are for ever filling sieves with water and rolling stones uphill, and trying to drink the water that continually runs away. The girl who



has in her the touch of genius which enables her to write, to paint, or to act, or to play, or to administrate, will certainly pass over the line into the region of comfort if not of honour. These girls are the exceptions. Most of them, as we said before, are incompetent. Those who would teach know nothing of the methods of teaching: nor have they passed examinations, nor have they learned anything at all thoroughly as boys learn things: those who would write novels have not the least knowledge or conception of dramatic effect, selection, exaggeration, emphasis, incident, humour, character, or any of the things which make up the art into which they plunge in sheer ignorance that it is an art at all. Those who would be artists can neither paint nor draw, even though they have obtained prizes and medals at the Schools which are kindly manufacturing every year fresh batches of incompetents who would like to be artists. Those who would go on the stage have no histrionic power. Those who would become professional musicians are only girls who can play a little better than the average. Those who would become singers are only fit for the "little music" of a middle-class drawing-room. Those who would administrate and become clerks, secretaries, managers, housekeepers, matrons, and so forth, have no training in business, no genius for details, no heads for organisation, and no power of authority. What is to be done for them? There is only the lowest work in every branch: that which is most miserably paid: and of that there is not enough to go round.

Alas! Katie was not one of those who are clever. Nature destined her, as she destines all but a very few women, for the home life: she was intended for love: she was meant to be happy with her lover first, and her husband next, and



then her children. Nature meant one thing. Fate, who constantly disregards Nature's intentions—indeed they have not been on speaking terms since the days of Adam and Eve—allotted another thing. She was too weak in spirit for the struggling competition of labour: she was not clever enough to excel in any art: she could not fight: she was not sharp enough to see openings, to push and shove, to apply continually, to make herself a burden and a nuisance until she could get what she wanted: she could not be importunate—other girls do this with brazen front though with sinking heart. Katie could not. Therefore she got no work except at rare intervals—and the little store dwindled and shrunk.

Then a great misfortune befell them. Lily fainted on the boards and had to be carried out in the sight of the audience. She was forgiven the first time, but she fainted again. This clearly showed that she had contracted vicious habits, and the manager dismissed her. And on the little store there were now two to be kept.

"My dears," said Miss Beatrice, "there was once a widow woman with a single cruse of oil. But the Man of God came and stayed with her, and the cruse wasted not."

"If there is a Man of God anywhere about," said Lily, irreverently, "he couldn't do better than stay at Harley House."

## CHAPTER IX.

## Tom's Dead Hand.

JAMES ROLFE sat in his uncle's room at his uncle's table and in his uncle's own wooden chair. He had succeeded to the business, apparently, as well as the estate. Bundles of papers were laid on the table before him; they were the papers connected with his uncle's estate, now his own. For he had no business of his own and his uncle's clients, if he had any left, had gone elsewhere. The tin boxes round the room with names painted on them contained the papers of dead clients who would pay no more fees.

The afternoons at the end of September are quiet in New Square, Lincoln's Inn. Save for an occasional footfall on the pavement or on the stairs there is nothing to disturb the legal intellect engaged upon the toughest job. But in September the legal intellect is chiefly unbent and upon the moors.

In the outer office two elderly clerks, who had worked together for forty years, under Mr. Joseph Addison, now dozed in their chairs. Papers were spread out before them and a pen lay ready to be dipped if anyone called, but they had no work to do. Their new master, in fact, kept them on purely for the sake of appearance. He thought that the presence of these respectable old gentlemen lent dignity to the office and the show of confidential family business. So, doubtless, it would have done, but for the fact that no one ever came to look at them. In the den beside the door the office boy, full of roast beef and mild ale, slumbered, his head upon the desk. It was a

blissful time with him, for he had nothing to do, no errands to run, no message to deliver, no bell to answer, and nothing to copy. He could go to sleep every day and all day long, and drew his pay as regularly as in the old master's time. In his own room James Rolfe, who had lunched copiously, with a pint of stout, slept peacefully. The offices of Uncle Joseph, deceased, had become a Castle of Indolence. Outside, the world went on, quite unconscious of the office. Nobody ever looked in. Even the postman passed it by without a letter or a parcel. Everybody was asleep all day long. It was like the Heaven of the solicitor's clerk. Each of us has his own little Heaven of imagination. In that of the solicitor's clerk, every man has an office to which he is bound to go every morning at nine-thirty, there to remain with an interval of an hour for dinner until half-past six or seven. It is a beatific office, because there is no work: nothing to transcribe, copy out, or engross, and everyone of the Elect may sleep all day, chat or tell stories, go out and have a glass of beer and a smoke, and take two hours instead of one for dinner, arrive late, go early, take long holidays and draw salaries continually increasing without any limit. A holy calm rested upon this office all day. The chief came late and went away at all hours, and as yet had said nothing at all about work or pay. The word sack had not been mentioned. A holy calm indeed! Now in James's former office—a small and humble place compared with this beautiful suite of rooms—a single boy represented the whole clerical staff: there were, to be sure, the usual bundles of papers on the table: but though there was, as in this office, an entire absence of clients, there was never any quiet or calm in it, but on the contrary the noisy laughter and the jokes of sporting men, Jem Rolfe's friends,

resounded in it and it was charged with an atmosphere of tobacco, beer, worry, and irritation, with duns continually calling and wanting to know, and the postman dropping letters from angry creditors with threats of proceedings, not to speak of the office boy, who was possessed by a devil, and was always doing something to madden his master, and to get his own ears boxed.

Yet five minutes, and this calm was to be rudely dispelled, not to return, so far as concerned the chief, for many a day. In fact it has never since returned. This afternoon, the holiest and the calmest, was the last day of real peace.

Two girls, about to cause this interruption, were at this moment in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

"I am sure it is the best thing to do, Katie," said one. "If this man was really a friend of Tom's, he would at least be able to advise—and you *must* have relations."

"I do not think he was a friend, although he was a cousin. But Tom told me to go to him if I was in trouble. We can but try, Lily."

Suddenly—without the least warning, in the most unexpected manner—every one of those sleepers were startled into consciousness.

The office-bell was rung.

Then the chief sat upright, dropped the half-smoked cigarette from his fingers, and seized the papers tied up with red tape which lay on the desk before him. He would be discovered, whoever it was that was come to disturb him, in the act of wrestling with legal intricacies. The two old clerks jumped in their chairs and each man seized a pen and dipped it in the ink, then, with squared shoulders, and heads bent over their work, and pens that flew with the swiftness of the ready

writer, they presented the proper appearance of industry and pressure, though I know not what they wrote. The office—it is a well-known rule—must not be discovered doing nothing. The boy at the door, startled out of sleep, lifted his head and threw open the pages of a big folio before him containing, I know not what old accounts and entries of bygone business. The impression of zeal and of an overwhelming amount of work having been started, he opened the door.

The bell had been rung by two young ladies, neither of whom was known to the boy. One of them gave him her card—"Miss Capel."

James jumped—there is no other way to describe the movement—when he received the card. He had put away his solemn promise and sacred pledge in so remote a corner of his brain that he had almost forgotten the promise and the name of Katharine Capel.

"What the devil," he murmured, "does she want?"

But when his visitors came in he turned pale and looked first at the card and then at Lily and then at Katie, and then at the card again, and then at Katie.

"Miss Capel?" he said bowing to Lily, and again looking at Katie with a kind of bewilderment.

"No—this is Miss Capel."

"Is—is your name Capel?" he asked. Why should not her name be Capel?

"You do not know me, Mr. Rolfe," said Katie. "I am—that is, I was—engaged to your cousin, Tom Addison."

"You were engaged to my cousin—you?" He kept staring at her face. "You?" Then he tried to pull himself together. "Were you? Excuse my surprise, Miss Capel: I had heard of you, but I did not at first catch the name. Yes—certainly—

Miss Capel—oh, yes! He always spoke of you by your christian name."

"My name is Katharine Regina."

"Katharine Regina—Regina?" he repeated the second name and still continued to gaze into her face, not rudely, but as one who recognises an old acquaintance.

"It is a family name."

Mr. Rolfe sat down without asking the ladies to take chairs—this they proceeded to do.

But he seemed unable to take his eyes off Katie's face, and he kept winking hard with both eyes at once.

"Katharine Regina! . . ." he repeated. "It is a most curious name—and Capel. Oh yes, I remember," he said with an effort. "Of course, I remember now. It was a most disastrous engagement for you, Miss Capel. Tom told me all about it, of course."

"I have come to you, Mr. Rolfe," said Katie, "because you were Tom's cousin, and he told me how you helped him in the matter of his uncle's will, and that you would help me too if I were in trouble."

James bowed with dignity. He had indeed helped his cousin in the most unselfish manner.

"I am in great trouble now."

"Anything that I can do, Miss Capel . . ." he began.

Having now recovered somewhat from his first surprise, James observed first that both girls presented the appearance of great poverty; it was legible in their hats, in their jackets, in their gloves, and in their boots.

"Only let me hear the circumstances," said James after making these observations. Perhaps the recollection of the sacred pledge and solemn promise was beginning to produce some effect upon him.



"I am so unfortunately situated," Katie explained, "that I do not know any of my relations. I want you to advise me how I am to find them—I am in very great straits, Mr. Rolfe, and I think if I could find them they might help me."

"Yes—that ought not to be difficult."

"My father died suddenly a few months before—before I lost Tom. He never told me anything about my relations at all."

"Oh! That was unusual. But you would find something to help you among his papers, I should say."

"He left no papers at all."

"That is more unusual still." James kept looking at her in the same enquiring way. "May I ask what was his profession?"

"He had none. Formerly he was in the army. He lived upon a pension, or an annuity of three hundred pounds a year which he drew regularly once a quarter. He left no papers behind him and received no letters. On the few occasions when I ventured to speak to him about my relations he forbade any mention of them. I think he had quarrelled with them: the only piece of writing which we were able to find after his death was a scrap of a letter"—she gave it to James, who read it aloud—"in case, therefore, of my not being able to call as usual for the money on Quarter Day, you can send it to me by cheque made payable to order and not crossed, in a registered letter, addressed to Willoughby Capel at the following address"—there the paper was torn and there was no more.

"His name," said James, "was Willoughby Capel—Willoughby Capel—and he had an annuity of three hundred pounds a year. Yes." He laid the scrap of paper upon his desk after looking at the handwriting. "You are sure that this is your father's own hand?"

"Yes, certainly."

He went on as if he were putting two and two together.

"Your own name is Katharine Regina and his was Willoughby Capel: and he had an annuity of three hundred pounds a year. Who paid him that annuity?"

"I do not know. I thought you would, for Tom's sake, help me to find out."

"Yes," he replied shutting both eyes tight, "I will help you. Oh! yes."

"Tom begged me in his last letter—his last letter"—she made that little gesture which assured her that the packet of letters was still in her pocket—"that you would help me if I went to you."

"What was he like—to look at—your father?"

"He had been, and was to the last, a very handsome man. He was tall and had regular features: he was over fifty years of age, but his hair was still unchanged: it was of a light-brown; he wore a small pointed beard and long moustaches. No one who had ever seen him would ever forget him."

"You are exactly like him," said James, speaking his thoughts instead of concealing them, as is the part of a wise man.

"Why—have you ever seen him?"

"No—but you have described yourself. Well—you desire, naturally, to find out your relations."

"Yes. I was a governess, but latterly I have been out of employment, and I have been trying to get work at the Museum. If my relations are rich, they may be able to help me. Except my friend here, there is no one in the world who knows or cares about me. Will you help me, Mr. Rolfe, for the sake of your poor dead cousin, who loved me?"

The tears rose to the girl's eyes: the breaking voice, and the attitude of sorrow and poverty and helplessness, ought to have made this young man spring from his chair and swear that he was ready to fly to the ends of the earth in order to help her. That he did not instantly and eagerly proffer his friendly offices was due to a most horrible suspicion—more than a suspicion—a discovery. The girl's father had received an annual stipend or income of £300: his name, she said, was Willoughby Capel: her description of the man exactly corresponded with the Captain Harry Willoughby who used to come regularly once a quarter to that very office for that same annual stipend; the donor of that trust-money was Miss Katharine Regina Willoughby: more than that, as if that was not enough, the girl's face was exactly that of Captain Willoughby: the resemblance was startling: it left no room for doubt: everybody could see it who had known the late Captain: as for himself, he remembered Captain Willoughby very well indeed: on her very first entrance he was struck with the resemblance, and he thought—forgetting Katie's existence—that it was Captain Willoughby's daughter come in person to claim her rights.

She was—she must be—Captain Willoughby's daughter, and she was come, not to claim her rights, but to ask him—him, of all men in the world—to take such steps as would, though this she knew not, lead to the establishment of her rights.

"I will advise," he said, coldly, "to the best of my ability. We might advertise. Are you disposed to spend money in advertising? It is costly."

"I have no money to spend in anything."

"That is unfortunate."

"If you are disposed to help me," Katie said timidly, and meeting no response in his eyes, "will you lend me the money to advertise? I would ask that an answer should be sent to me under my full name, Katharine Regina Capel. That would perhaps meet the eye of some cousin."

"Advertising costs a great deal of money," James replied and with averted eyes. "You had better let me make a few enquiries first. Will you write down the late address of your father and the name of his club? Thank you. I will make enquiries, and perhaps we may stumble on something. It is certainly unusual"—he cleared his voice and shut his eyes half-a-dozen times in succession—"most unusual, for a man to die without relations of any kind anywhere. Perhaps they are in America or the Colonies, in which case our search might be hopeless. However, I will do my best—yes—my best, believe me, Miss Capel. Leave the matter in my hands and take no steps yourself. You understand, I am sure, that when you have placed your affairs in the hands of your solicitor you must not meddle with them, yourself, at all. Leave the whole matter in my hands."

He spoke bravely, but his voice somewhat lacked something of sincerity, and he did not lift his eyes.

"Katie," said Lily, when they were in the street once more, "there is something wrong about that man. He has done something. He can't look you in the face, and he turned red and pale and all colours at once; and why did he keep winking with both eyes?"

"I believe that Tom and he were not exactly friends. But he said he would make enquiries."

"He certainly *said* he would, whether he means to or not—but why shouldn't he? He will send

in a bill for his services, I suppose. Katie, if I were you I would put in that advertisement as soon as there was money to spare for it."

But of money, alas! there was none.

When the girls were gone, James sat down with a perturbed countenance and an unquiet heart. He had no longer any desire to sleep.

Presently he rang the bell, and one of the old clerks answered it.

"I want," he said, pretending to search among the papers, "to find the last receipt for an annuity which my uncle used to pay to Captain Harry Willoughby, who appears to have died about six months ago."

The clerk brought the book with all the receipts.

"This is his signature, is it? Very good. The last, dated January, of the present year. Yes. Do you remember Captain Willoughby?"

"Very well, sir."

"Where did he live?"

"I do not know. He came here once a quarter and drew his money."

"Thank you—that will do."

The signature of the receipt corresponded exactly with the writing of the torn letter. There was now not the least room for doubt. This girl—Tom's *fiancée*—was the heiress of the trust-money. It was his duty—it was his clear and certain duty—to give up the whole of it. It was no longer possible to juggle with words and to gloss over things; the heiress was found—he had to give up the whole of that trust-money to the girl. What a terrible hole it would make in his income! There was no other way out of it. As for what he had already done, Courts of Justice might take a harsh view of that: but it was honesty itself compared with keeping the property now that he

had found the heiress. She must have been led, he thought, to his office by the Dead Hand of Tom himself. James Rolfe was not a superstitious person, but he had read novels, and he knew very well that dead people do constantly visit evildoers with curses and bring trouble upon them, especially when they have dealt wickedly with wards.

Yet, he thought, being a man of this generation, and therefore little afraid of dead hands, what harm could a dead man's hand do to him compared with what he would do to himself if he gave up the property? And in what words should he explain to Harriet? And how would that dear creature regard the loss of three-fourths of her income and a return to the old life?

He put the torn scrap of writing in the safe along with the old letter from Miss Willoughby, the only evidence of the Trust; and then, though it was only half-past three, he took his hat and walked out of the office. He could no longer sit there. When he was gone, some of the former rest and calm returned. The visit of the young ladies had brought no work. The two old clerks began to doze again. But the boy, disturbed by the appearance of youth and beauty, and no longer able to sleep, read a penny novelette.

In the evening, James argued out the whole thing with himself over some Scotch whisky and a pipe.

He was no worse off, he assured himself, than he had been before the young lady turned up. He knew, to be sure, who the heiress was: he was not obliged, however, to know: there was nothing formally and legally to connect Miss Capel with the daughter of Captain Willoughby. What did it matter that he himself knew the fact, provided that he kept it to himself? No one could possibly find out that he knew it. But oh! what a differ-



ence there would have been if Tom had known it before he went away! He had promised Tom to give her all that was left after the Trust was paid. A ridiculous promise extorted at a moment when his mind was not in the usual judicial balance. Ridiculous, indeed! But no one knew it except Tom. Yet, he thought it would be well to keep the promise to a limited extent. He might give her all the money that was in Tom's name in the Bank when he went away. How much was it? Thirty pounds or so. He would send—and then he laughed, remembering a most remarkable occurrence. He had quite forgotten to ask the lady her address. Therefore he could not send her anything. Nor could he do anything at all.

It was midnight. He sat in the library, which was perfectly quiet, because it was at the back of the house, and everybody was gone to bed. Suddenly—no man was more free from superstition than James Rolfe—he felt a horrid tremor seize all his limbs, and cold dew stood upon his forehead. It seemed as if Tom himself—his dead cousin Tom—stood beside him invisible but audible, hurling reproaches at him, calling him “Cur, Liar, Thief, Blackguard,” and similar ungentlemanly names—taking, in fact, a mean advantage of his ghostliness. He also threatened vengeance in some undefined manner, which made James feel just as uncomfortable as Moab or Ascalon might have felt when it was reported in the Bazaar that a Prophet was predicting woe for its people.

James seized the decanter.

When he went upstairs, some time after, he awoke his wife—who was sweetly dreaming that she was going to live for ever, always young and always beautiful, with champagne, and silk dresses trimmed with lace, and every night a stall at the Theatre—by banging his shin against the sharp

edge of the coalscuttle. This is enough to make the most pious man awake his wife.

"Good gracious, James," she cried, "what is the matter? Can't you turn up the gas?"

He replied somewhat thickly, rubbing the injured part:

"It's—it's Tom's Dead Hand, my dear."

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## CHAPTER X.

### The Last Shilling.

THE two girls sat together on Katie's bed. Spread out in Lily's lap was all the money that was left—twenty-two shillings and sixpence in silver. The little heap meant a fortnight's support.

"Let me reckon up," said Katie. "You are so stupid at figures, you poor thing. There's three and sixpence for bed and one and nine for breakfast: that makes five shillings and three pence each." She set aside ten shillings and sixpence: "There—that is one week: there is left twelve shillings for the next week."

"But there must be washing, Katie—and, oh! how *can* we live on a few slices of bread and butter taken in the morning?"

"When the money is all gone, where is the bread and butter to come from, Lily?"

"Where indeed?"

"It is all my fault, Katie," Lily burst out. "I have been eating up your money—oh! I will run away and leave you, at least to have all that is left."

"Don't, Lily. We are all alone: let us keep

together, whatever happens. Lily, let us only keep together. Let us say to each other that we are not quite alone in the world."

"What can we do? Oh! what can we do?"

"I do not know. There are too many of us, Lily. There is not enough work for all, and somehow we do not seem to get even our share of what there is. Let us have patience. Put away the money, dear. There is a whole fortnight before us. Let us try everywhere. It isn't so hot now."

"No. But it will get cold soon, and then—why—Katie"—she laughed bitterly—"with no work to do, no money for lodgings and food, and no clothes fit for winter, I do think we shall be the two happiest and merriest and most lighthearted girls in all the world." She laughed again, but hysterically. "We will go about hand in hand up and down the streets, laughing and singing. We will go to church to join in the hymns of thanksgiving. Everybody will wonder to see such a happy pair."

"Don't, Lily."

"I must. Sometimes, I must speak. Oh! I must, when I think what has happened to you and me and what happens to other girls. Somewhere or other there are your cousins and mine, sitting in ease and comfort, a little anxious about their dresses, talking about their parties and their lovers, while you and I are looking forward to starvation. What have we done that we should be punished in this awful way? I say, Katie—what have we done? What have we done?"

This was the question which she asked herself continually.

She sprang to her feet and rushed to the window and threw it open. The cold autumn-air blew

upon her forehead. Above the chimneys and the roofs and the stars in the clear sky there shone the calm, cold moon, full and bright.

"Oh!" she cried, "I am full of dreadful thoughts—of things horrible and detestable. Katie, is there such a thing as religion? Then—why are we so deserted? We have done no harm to anybody, though we may have had bad thoughts. Why are we so horribly punished?"

"Don't, Lily—what is the good of asking?"

"I must ask. I have prayed—oh! I have prayed for hours in the night, I have torn my heart out with prayers. Is it wicked to pray for work and food? Why, there are thousands of wicked women who have plenty of food every day and no anxiety. Is there any such thing as wickedness?"

"Don't, Lily." It was all that she could say.

"The Heavens are silent. Look: there is the cold face of the moon. There is no care or trouble in it about us. Pray—Katie—pray, like me, till you feel as if your words were echoed back from the hard and senseless rocks. Oh! why were we born? Why are we allowed to live?"

She gasped and panted because of the thought that kept coming again and again.

"We are not obliged to live," she went on. "Katie, I am full of the most dreadful thoughts. It must be because we have so little to eat, I suppose, and because the future is so black. Horrible phantoms fill my brain, asleep or awake. I can't tell you what they say to me."

"Let us pray again. We shall get, for answer, patience and resignation."

Lily threw herself upon the bed, her face in her hands. But Katie knelt beside her and prayed for both.

In a fortnight a great deal may be done if you have luck. Alas! these girls had none. In October the people, it is true, have all come back, but the work has all been given out. At the Museum, Katie, a new comer, was known to few: and there was very little work going at all. Outside, there seemed no situations vacant: even the cashier's place in the draper's shop at seven and sixpence a week was filled up—yet how readily now would they have taken that place.

They read all the advertisements and applied at all the offices; but there was nothing.

Then for a week they lived on the breakfast bread and butter; and in the evenings they sat silent, always hand in hand, in Katie's cubicle, waiting for the day when there should be no more money, hungry, footsore, and heartsore. And in the night there came the dreadful dreams which torture those who are insufficiently fed.

There came at last one evening—it was Friday evening—when there was no money, except a single shilling. Saturday morning is that on which the residents of Harley House pay in advance for the next week. If they cannot pay they must go. The rule is imperative. If the Matron were to break that rule in favour of any resident she must pay the money herself in advance. There is no suspension of that rule allowed under any excuse whatever. To suspend the rule would convert Harley House into a charitable institution, which, as is proudly stated in the prospectus, is not its character.

Therefore, the two girls would have to go. I think that the Committee, had they known the facts of the case, would have relaxed that rule, or even paid a week or two in advance themselves for these two girls.

By this time they had suffered so much that

they spoke but little of their sorrows. They sat together and waited in silence. Next day, they would not even have a bed to lie upon or a place where they could sit apart from the rest of the world. What would it be like? I think that even in facing the most terrible suffering there is something that consoles in the curiosity of wondering what it will be like.

There is nothing in which people differ more than in the way they take disaster. Most of us are distinctly "worsened" by misfortune, particularly in youth. Of these two girls one at least, the girl with the splendid physique, born for the enjoyment of her youth, took punishment in the most rebellious way in the world. The more she was chastened the less was she resigned, until, in these days of the direst calamity, she was maddened with the sense of undeserved suffering. What had they done? Well: they had had fathers; Katie found that explanation of their troubles long ago. It really explains a great deal of human suffering, although two of the Prophets disagree about it. Katie endured in silence and put no question to the silent Heavens. Things that are ordered must be endured.

Downstairs, in the drawing-room, the Residents were talking of them. Ladies who go in hunger are very slow to speak of their own sufferings, but they are quick to perceive the privations undergone by others.

"They have not taken tea for a fortnight," said Miss Beatrice, "the Matron told me so."

"Katie Capel has sold her engagement ring," said another. "Nothing but the most dreadful necessity would compel her to do that."

"They have pawned all their clothes except what they stand in," said another.



"They have tramped over the whole of London and they have found nothing."

"And they have no friends at all. Neither of them has any friends or any relations that she knows of."

Then there was a murmuring among each other, and presently Miss Beatrice went round with a pencil and a bit of paper and whispered with each.

It was Lily who really understood what their future meant; at least, she thought she did, and she began to draw a realistic picture of what was going to happen. It was almost worthy of the great Master of the Horrible and the Disgusting. Over a great part of it I have dropped a veil.

"To-morrow," she said, "we shall begin to starve. We may, if we are fortunate, catch cold and die quickly of pneumonia or bronchitis. That is to say, you may. As for me, I never catch anything, because I am so strong. We have got a shilling: we shall use up that in penny loaves: I don't know how long it will last because I am not going to keep any account of time. What does it matter whether we starve in a week or in a fortnight? The sooner 'tis over the sooner to sleep. Because starving, you see, Katie, is a very slow and troublesome way of dying. We shall wander about till we are obliged to sit down and the policeman will order us to move on. Then we shall feel very weak, as well as very tired, and we shall stagger as we go, and tumble down, and they will carry us to the station, and say that we are drunk."

"Don't, Lily."

But she went on. It seemed to console her, or it fed her rage, to picture the very worst that could happen.

"You are happier than I, dear, because you are not nearly so strong. Why, there is a thin stick of an arm for you; and look at mine, big and strong still, in spite of our privations. I am a dreadfully strong girl. When I was born, Katie—I have never told you this—all the wicked fairies came about my cradle. One of them said, 'She shall have no mother;' and another, 'She shall have no relations to help her;' and a third, 'She shall have no friends;' and a fourth, 'She shall have no lovers;' and another, 'She shall have no money;' and yet another, 'She shall have no work;' and another, 'She shall have no food;' and then there was one, the Queen of the Wicked Fairies—an old woman with only two front teeth left—and those sticking out over her lower lip—and a most malignant eye, who carried a cat-o'-ninetails instead of a sceptre. She stood over me and said, 'This child shall be splendidly strong, so that she shall yearn and long horribly after all she cannot have, and she shall suffer twice as long and twice as much as any other woman.'"

"Lily! Something may happen yet."

"Oh! yes, something may. People have been known to pick up shillings in the streets. We may beg in the streets. We will borrow a hymn-book and sing along the road 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye.' I've got a good strong voice. But we shan't like it. There will be such terrible discomfort about it that we shall go back to our starving and begin to get through the terrible job at once and have done with it. Katie, my head is full of horrible things. Suppose," she whispered, "suppose we resolve to die at once and have done with it?"

"No, Lily, no. Let us wait and receive what is sent."

"It is truly wonderful, Katie, to hear you talk. Will nothing make you rebel? Why, if there is no place for us in the world, should we stay in it? Some women are born consumptive and have to die. Others, like ourselves, are born redundant. It is a new disease. There is now a great deal of Redundancy among women: we suffer from Redundancy. It is incurable. No drops have been found for it and no pills. We shall have to die of that disease. 'Died, in the streets on a doorstep, after long suffering, of Redundancy, Lily and Katharine.' That would read very sweetly, wouldn't it, on a tombstone? But there will be no tombstone for us two, dear—we shall be buried by the parish in the pauper's corner, where the graves stand side by side as thick as they can be placed, and the dead bodies of the men and women moulder away forgotten. It will be like the sea that has closed over a sinking ship without so much as a single fragment left. In a few days we shall be as much forgotten as if we had never lived: perhaps to us it will be the same as if we had never lived."

Lily's bitter words fell upon Katie like the blows of a scourge. She could endure, but she would not rebel.

"Leave us some hope," she said. "If you take away *that*, we are indeed the most wretched women in the world."

Just then they heard a soft step coming up the stairs. Through the open drawing-room below, they could hear Miss Augusta playing the piano sweetly and softly. The step was that of Miss Beatrice the Consoler, who came to talk to them. "My dears," she said, taking a hand of each, "I am afraid you are in terrible trouble."

"Yes," said Katie, "we are in very sad trouble."

"Have you found nothing to do, children?"

"Nothing."

"Have you no friends to help you?"

"Not one."

"Oh! my poor children. But there is one Friend. Think of Him."

Lily shook her head impatiently.

"Have you any money left?"

"No—none," said Katie. "And to-morrow we must pay the week in advance, or go."

Miss Beatrice was silent, because it is difficult to find consolation for the lack money: most of the poets and writers despise money: and yet, here were two girls who, because they had no money . . .

"My dear," she said, "will the Matron not give you leave to stay a week or two on credit?"

"No—it is against the rules."

Then Miss Beatrice exhorted them to patience and told them in her sweet religious way how the Lord, who is the Father, is wont to open unexpected doors and make things possible which had seemed impossible: until even the hard heart of Lily melted and they all three wept together.

Then Miss Beatrice blessed them and went away with another exhortation to patience and a hint, which she meant for a promise—but they were stupid and did not understand—that something good and unexpected would happen next day. Why—why did she not tell them what had been done? For in the drawing-room there had been a collection made for them and out of their poverty and straightness these poor ladies had got together the sum of fifteen shillings and ten pence, which was to be given to the girls in the morning, so that they might pay the Matron and have another week to look about them and to find some

employment. Also it was resolved unanimously that their cruel case should be brought before the Committee, although Harley House is not a charitable institution, in the hope that something might be found for them.

By a most unfortunate accident, however, that little collection never reached the hands for whom it was intended.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### A Night Out.

**T**HE breakfast at Harley House was served, to suit the convenience of those whose work begins early, at half-past seven. This was the last breakfast for which the girls had paid. They were the first to sit down, because they wished to avoid questions.

"This is the last breakfast paid for, Katie," said Lily. "Let us eat as much as we possibly can. When shall we get another breakfast, and where?"

Katie drank the tea but unfortunately could eat nothing.

"You are taking a mean advantage, Katie," said her friend. "You know you are not half so strong as I am, and yet you are taking three hours' start in the starving race. Put something in your pocket. Never mind the rules. You must and shall."

She cut off half-a-dozen great crusts and slices of bread and crammed them into her bag, the little hand-bag that carried absolutely all the possessions of the two girls. Their watches, their wardrobes, even Katie's engagement ring,

everything was gone except the clothes they stood in. Never was wreck more complete. Never had Misfortune made a cleaner sweep of everything. Friends, work, wardrobe, money—what more could she take? In a warmer climate she would have torn the clothes off their backs, but in Great Britain this is not allowed to Misfortune, who leaves grudgingly their clothes upon the backs, even of the shirt and match-makers. One thing more was left to Misfortune. She could separate the two girls. You shall see presently that she even accomplished that.

"Now," said Lily, "we have eaten our breakfast—at least I have. Let us go at once, before the Matron comes down, and while there is nobody to ask questions. Come, Katie, we have left nothing upstairs. Come."

Now that the supreme moment had arrived, when there was no longer any room for hope, Lily assumed a defiant air, much as one who is led forth to the stake and blasphemes the Holy Inquisition to the last. "Come, Katie," for she lingered and trembled. "Come, I say. It will not help us to wait—and cry. We have done our best; we have prayed and there has been no answer. Let us go out now and starve. Come, dear Katie—oh! my dear—it will not help to cry. Let us go out and find a place where we can sit down and wait."

It was eight o'clock. When the door closed behind them, Katie sank upon the doorstep and broke into sobs and moaning.

"Oh, Tom—Tom!" she cried. "How can you be happy in Heaven while I am so miserable here? If I am to join you, ask them to kill me quickly."

"They'll do that," said Lily, grimly. "Come."

She put her hand in Katie's arm and dragged her away.



Five minutes later Miss Beatrice came downstairs, her face full of sweetness and satisfaction, because she was now going to demonstrate to these two girls, by means of her collection of fifteen shillings and tenpence, how faith and patience and resignation are always rewarded.

But they were gone. One of the servants had seen them leave the house. Upstairs, they had left nothing.

Perhaps they would return in the evening.

But they did not. The evenings came and went at Harley House. The girls came home at night heavy of eye and head, tired with their day's work; Miss Augusta played to them; Miss Beatrice talked to them. For a week or so they remembered the two who had sunk under the waters; then they forgot them. As for the collection, it was all returned to the donors, and only Miss Beatrice remembered the girls and prayed for them that they might yet be saved.

At nine o'clock Katie began to be tired.

"Are we to walk about all day long, Lily?" she asked. "Can we not find some place to sit down and rest?"

"We will go to the British Museum. It is quiet there at least."

They did. They went to the room where are the great pictures of Assyrian battles.

Here they sat down. The place was very silent and peaceful. There were very few visitors so early; the attendants with their wands sat about already disposed for the gentle doze which helps them through the day. Presently Katie leaned her head upon Lily's shoulder and fell fast asleep. But Lily slept not. She had been awake nearly all night, but she was not disposed for slumber. She sat looking at fate with wrathful eyes and continually putting the same question—

it has been asked by every unhappy person since the world began—"What have we done—what have we done—that we should so while the rest of mankind escape?"

The morning passed—noon came—the attendant woke up and began to saunter about the rooms with the intention of getting an appetite for dinner. One o'clock struck—Lily sat motionless, unconscious of the time—Katie still slept beside her. The attendant went away to his dinner, and returned refreshed but languid, and disposed for another doze. When he awoke at three the two girls still sat there, one asleep, and the other bolt upright, her dark brow contracted, her black eyes full of rage.

It is not an unusual thing at museums of the scientific kind for tired visitors to sit down and go to sleep in them, nor is it quite unknown, in collections which are free, for people to drop in for the sake of rest. Bethnal Green Museum is naturally considered in the neighbourhood as erected mainly for the convenience of children and a place of safety for them in bad weather. The custodian therefore regarded the sleeping damsel without surprise.

It was about half-past three that Katie awoke.

"Well, dear," said Lily, "you have had a long sleep. Do you feel better?"

"Yes, I am quite well now. But oh! Lily, I am so hungry."

"It was a good thing that I remembered to put some bread in my pocket. Let us eat our dinner."

They did so, and were strengthened by the bread.

"And now, Katie, we may move on. I don't quite know where we are going. But we had better go, I think."

They went outside and turned westwards.

Fortunately it was a fine afternoon and warm. After the bread they felt strong again and able to walk.

They found themselves after wandering for half-an-hour in St. James's Park. It was then five o'clock.

"Katie," said Lily, "do you see those seats? There is a whole row of them outside the railings. They are to be our bed to-night. To-morrow—no, we must not think of to-morrow—do you think we might break in upon our shilling? Oh, how tedious it is! Look at the heaps of people who are doing nothing, I wonder if they are as poor and as miserable as ourselves."

St. James's Park this afternoon was thronged with people. They lay about the grass; they sat upon the free benches; they leaned over the railings; they stood upon the bridge; they threw crumbs to the ducks; they looked as if they never did any work, and did not want to do any work, and never had any work offered them. They might have been as poor as the two girls, but they were certainly not miserable at all. It may be laid down as a broad principle that nobody is ever miserable who has solved the problem of living without doing any work. At six o'clock the evening was beginning to fall. Then Lily drew Katie, who was now simply acquiescent, out of the Park.

"We will spend threepence," she said. "We will buy more bread, because that goes furthest. With threepenny-worth of bread we shall have a supper that will carry us on until the morning. Why, Katie, we shall actually, with care, make our shilling last till Monday morning. That is splendid. After that I suppose we shall fulfil the purpose for which we were born and be starved to death. Come, dear, don't give in; hold up your face: try to look as if you liked it."

When the lights were lit in the street and the shops, there began for a few minutes a new interest, but it lasted a very little while.

"Lily," said Katie, "I *cannot* walk any more. Take me to some place where I can sit down."

"Well, then, we must go back to St. James's Park. It is the only place that I know of where we can sit down."

At this moment a great piece of luck befell them. They met, walking up Waterloo Place, no other than Dittmer Bock. That young gentleman had been turning his Saturday afternoon to useful account by observing how trade was conducted in the West End.

"Oh!" cried Katie. "We are saved, Lily! Dittmer! you will help us."

She explained the situation in a few words. But the young German's face dropped. Alas! he had but eightpence in the world; he had lent three shillings and sixpence to a friend—one of the three who shared his room—and he could not possibly be paid before Monday. What was he to do? How could he help them? Eightpence is a ridiculously small sum. Would they go with him to his lodgings, where he would persuade the other men to give up their beds and bestow themselves somewhere—on the landings, for example?

"No," said Katie, "we cannot do that, Dittmer. I am afraid we must spend the night here, in the open air, and perhaps to-morrow you will come for us and find some way of helping us. Oh! it will not be so very bad here; the night is not cold, and our jackets are thick. I am not afraid, now that we have found you."

Dittmer hesitated. He had nothing to pawn—no watch or chain—he had no other clothes than those he wore; his friends and fellow-clerks were as poor as himself; at that moment he had no

more than that eightpence with which he had proposed to tide over the Sunday. With only forty pounds a year, you see, a young man is liable to days of tightness; he takes them as a necessary part of a situation which is only temporary. Therefore he laughs and goes hungry with a cheerful heart. If an old man has to go hungry, he grows melancholy, because the situation is permanent, so to speak. But that a time of tightness should have happened at such a juncture was indeed unfortunate. The eightpence was altogether at their service. But yet . . .

"I know a man," said Dittmer, "who will lend me five, or even ten shillings on Monday. My friend will also pay me back two shillings out of my loan on the same day. Perhaps our landlady would take you into the house, but she makes rules and will admit no ladies at all to her lodgings. But it is impossible, Kätchen—you cannot pass the whole night upon a bench. It is impossible."

"We must," said Lily. "If you have not any money, there is no help for it. If that were all, what matter?"

"In that case," said Dittmer, "I shall pass the night upon the bench with you. Himmel! Could I go home and leave you here—by yourselves?" He turned and walked with them towards St. James's Park.

"Oh, Katie!" said Lily, "what a difference—WHAT a difference it makes to have a Man with us! I feel somehow as if we should pull through our troubles. I don't know how it is to be done or why we should think so. But he inspires confidence. Courage, dear, we have a Man with us. Oh! why don't they keep a Man at Harley House only in order to inspire confidence?"

They began their night at about half-past seven when the place was full of people walking through,

but the girls were tired. They tied their handkerchiefs round their necks and sat close together, Lily on the outside and Katie between her and Dittmer, by which means she was a little protected from the cold.

A night in the open air in the month of October may be enjoyable under certain conditions, which must take the form of thick blankets to begin with. But it cannot by any stretch of imagination be considered warm. The revulsion of feeling, however, with the two girls at meeting with a protector; the change from despair to confidence which Dittmer inspired, made them suddenly gay. They laughed and prattled; they made little silly jokes which pleased them all three; they seemed to passers-by like a party of young people perfectly happy and without a care; just as if their limbs were not aching all over and their feet were not getting as cold as a stone; and as if they were not desperately hungry.

"It is nine o'clock," said Lily. "Time for supper. Herr Dittmer, will you join us? We have a beautiful supper, made altogether of the finest wheaten meal, exquisitely prepared and most delicately baked till it is a beautiful rich brown. It consists partly of crust and partly of crumb. Pray, which portion do you prefer, or shall I assist you to a little of both—without the stuffing?" and then these foolish girls laughed. They were safe. Dittmer had them in his charge. They were quite safe now.

Dittmer refused to share in their supper because he said, mendaciously, he had already made a copious meal of bread and sausage, which would serve him till the morning. Then the girls ate half the bread between them, and wrapped up the rest for their breakfast.

At about ten the number of passengers greatly



diminished. About the same time it grew much colder; a little wind sprang up, rattling among the sparse leaves of the trees. Katie kept dropping off to sleep and waking again with a start. Lily seemed sleeping soundly, and Dittmer was smoking a cigar stolidly. At last Katie dropped her head and fell into a sleep from which she did not awake till midnight, when she started into wakefulness. Dittmer Bock still sat with a cigar between his lips, patiently, as if nothing was the matter.

"You are cold," he said. "Take my hand and run a little, or jomp, joost jomp." Katie tried just to jump, but she was too tired either to run or to jump. She was desperately cold. Lily, for her part, seemed to mind nothing. Also, Katie longed with an intense yearning to lie down and stretch herself out.

Then Dittmer showed the ingenuity of Man.

He made her lie along the bench, her head in Lily's lap. He wrapped her skirts tightly round her feet. He found a pair of gloves in his pocket—he wore twelves, I think—and put them on Katie's hands, over her own, so that she had a double pair. And then he produced his own handkerchief—a large coloured silk handkerchief of a patriarchal character—and tied it round her neck and over her head. Lastly, he sat down at her feet and laid the skirts of his great-coat over them, so that she might be still more protected from the cold.

"Now," he said, "Schlafen sie wohl, Kätchen."

He lit another cigar—remember that they were cigars of Hamburg, not of Havannah—and Katie dropped off to sleep again.

She did not wake up till five o'clock. The young German still sat patient and resolute, his hands in his pockets; he was nearly frozen with

the cold ; he had turned up the collar of his coat ; and he had not slept for one single moment during the whole night.

"Dittmer," said the girl.

"Ya ; I am awake. Sleep on, Kätchen. It is only five o'clock."

"No, I have slept long enough. And the seat is very hard." She got up and looked about her. It was still night ; by the lamplight she saw that all the benches near them were similarly occupied with sleeping figures.

"Are these people all as poor as ourselves, Dittmer ? And, oh ! you have put your own gloves on my hands and tied your handkerchief round my neck. Oh ! it is good of you, Dittmer." She took his hand. "Yesterday I thought I had not a friend in the whole world except Lily. And I forgot you. Forgive me. I forgot that you promised to be my brother. And you have thrown your great-coat over me and are sitting without it. Oh ! it is a shame. Put it on directly."

"Kätchen, you must not forget. It is true that at this moment I have no more than eightpence, and to-morrow is Sunday, yet I will find something. Listen to my plan. There is a man—he is from Hamburg ; he used to work for my father's Delikatessen-Handlung : he came to London to make his fortune, and has already a large baker's shop of his own. I will go to him ; I will ask him, because he knows me, to take you into his house for a week or two until you can find a better place. The baker has a good heart ; he will weep when I tell him your misfortunes. Kätchen, it was very wrong to forget you had a brother."

"I will never forget it any more."

Dittmer kissed her fingers.

"All that I have—it is not much—is yours. All my brains; all my knowledge; all my work is yours, Kätchen. You are my sister; you are also the only woman in the world whom I shall ever love. Ja, my sister—I know. But for me there is no other woman in the world."

Katie made no reply. The tears rose to her eyes. Perhaps, had he pressed her at that moment, gratitude would have suffered him to change the title of sister. But he was too loyal to take advantage of her emotion.

All this time Lily made no sign at all of being awake, or of hearing anything. She sat motionless and apparently sleeping just as she had sat all the night.

Presently the dawn appeared and grew gradually and spread, until another day was born.

Then the ladies and gentlemen who had also slept in this *al fresco* hotel woke up and rose from their benches, and began to stamp and swing their arms and in other ways endeavoured to restore the circulation. They were of a broken-down and reduced appearance for the most part; perhaps because St. James's Park, to the neighbourhood of which they belonged, is situated in an aristocratic part of the town. When they had warmed themselves they all went their ways; some with a hopeful stride, but most, creeping, or slouching, uncertain: and what their ways were on this Sabbath morning when no one could seek work anywhere and all the offices were closed, the Lord only knows.

"On Sunday morning," said Dittmer, "bakers sleep late. I go to seek my friend at seven."

"I do not know," said Lily, starting up with animation, "that I have ever passed a more delightful night. I mean it, Katie. It was cold, I dare say, but the past is now done with. We

have broken with respectability; we have spent a whole night out, sleeping in the Park. Whatever happens now we can never be governesses any more. We have lost our character. Nobody would employ a girl for a governess who had slept out all night. I rejoice. We have got a man to advise us. Let us eat up all the rest of our bread, and then we will go to find the baker. We are already on a lower level; we can now do any kind of work. I feel as if I could marry the baker and take the money in the shop."

She divided the bread into three portions, but again Dittmer refused his share and the girls finished it.

"And now," said Dittmer, "I will go to prepare the mind of the baker. Wait for me here. In one hour I return. Then you will find repose while you look about and consider what is to be done next. In one hour I come back. Remain here without moving and I return; in one little hour I return. Ja. I komm."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### In the Fog.

HE strode away in the yellow light of the autumn morning.

"He is gone," said Lily. "I feel as if I was going to despair again."

"He will be back soon, let us walk about. But we will keep near this place for fear of missing him."

"Katie"—no one ever anticipated, prophecied, and realised the future so clearly and so wholly

as Lily—"I understand exactly what is going to happen. We shall go to the Baker. He will be of course a Master Baker, the Queen's Chief Baker perhaps. He will be a friendly Baker and he will talk English much worse than Dittmer; we shall stay with him for a week or two and then we shall go into the shop and keep accounts, or perhaps sell loaves and rolls and buns across the counter. I shall like selling the buns better than keeping accounts. But you will keep the accounts. Either occupation will be much better than teaching horrid children. And then, you know, when we have quite got used to the life and forgotten all about Harley Street and remember only the misery of starving gentility, there will come along a handsome young baker of German origin and we shall—that is, I shall—go off to church with him and keep his shop for him ever after."

"It will be an honourable life. And oh! what does it matter to you and me now whether we call ourselves gentlewomen or not?"

"Nothing, my dear. But I wish Dittmer would come back."

Where the fog came from I know not. But it fell upon them swiftly and unexpectedly. First, it turned the sun into a copper disk about the size of a warming-pan, and then it shut him out from view altogether. And first that fog blurred the branches of the trees and then it clothed them and covered them up with white clouds, and then it became yellow and caused the people who breathed it to cough and choke, and then it became suddenly black with the blackness of midnight.

"Katie, let us stay quite still. Let us sit here and not move for fear of losing him. This will not last long."

It was a terrible fog: it was the well-known and historical fog when the people could not attend the morning service, or, if any found their way thither, they found that the fog had filled the church so that nothing could be seen except the nearest lamps, and if any were in the streets they either stayed where they happened to be, or they rambled miserably about losing themselves.

The fog lasted all day long. Until nightfall it lay over the broad City, insomuch that infidels believed the story of Egyptian darkness, and many were converted. It killed a large number, of course, but I do not know how many: it developed asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, and consumption in thousands who had thought themselves strong and lusty and now go hobbling towards the churchyard: it gave atrophy to infants, indigestion to young ladies, and the middle-aged it deprived of their gastric powers, so that they have had, ever since, to give up all their beer, porter, port and sherry, burgundy and champagne, claret and Rhine wine, and now drink weak whisky and water with lunch and dinner. Singers it robbed of their voice: clergymen of their cheerfulness: actors of their memory: and workingmen of every kind and degree it filled with discontent as to their own lot, doubt as to their own powers, and despair as to their future. It was not until three o'clock next morning that it cleared away and people were able to look about again—and to see the clear sky set with stars and the ghosts all flying away and once more to hope.

But by that time, as you will see, it was too late for Katie and for Lily.

They sat on their bench for an hour hoping that Dittmer would grope his way back to them, with news from the baker.

He was on his way back to them, with the best



of news. But the fog fell upon him, as upon all the rest of the town, and caused him to stop and consider. He who in a black fog stops to consider is lost—for he turns round and instantly forgets the direction in which he was walking. Dittmer Bock did this, and instead of marching straight back to St. James's Park, which was not far from the baker's, and in a south-westerly direction, he turned north and walked off resolutely in the direction of Edinburgh. So that when the fog cleared he was already well on his way to York.

The girls waited in the Park while the hours crept on slowly.

"If we do not move," said Katie, "the fog will lift and he will come back to us. Let us wait."

"I am hungry," said Lily, who had the day before been so brave to face starvation. "I must eat, whatever happens. Katie, will you sit here, while I go and buy something? I am certain that I can find my way back. We will spend all our money and then trust to Dittmer."

"Oh! Lily, you must not leave me alone."

"Then come with me, Katie, we shall not be gone five minutes. I can find my way blindfold. To be sure it is blindfold. We keep quite straight along the railings and we get to Buckingham Palace Road, where there are coffee-houses."

They kept along the railings without much difficulty; then they came to the corner and had to cross the open Place before the Palace. And now the trouble began; after what seemed to Katie half-an-hour they found themselves not in Buckingham Palace Road at all, but in front of more railings. The thick brown fog grew darker and thicker: then a terrible bewilderment fell upon them: they knew not which was north, south, east, or west: they knew not from what

quarter they had come or where these railings might be: and there was nobody to ask; they were lost in the fog, like Dittmer himself, and like every human creature out on that terrible Sunday morning—when the wayfarers wandered in the fog like those poor lost creatures who wander in the Desert, round and round, only to come upon their own footsteps again, or those who are lost in a Canadian forest and turn in a circle round and round, while they think they are marching in a straight line.

“What shall we do, Lily?”

“Let us walk along the railings: we shall find something.”

They found an open gate leading somewhere: it must be into the Park; but what part of the Park?

“We are lost, Katie,” said Lily; “we must wait till the fog lifts.”

They waited, but it did not lift.

“Where does Dittmer live, Katie?”

“I do not know.”

“Where is his office in the City?”

“I do not know.”

“Then we are lost indeed, if we cannot find him.”

They stood beside the railings, not daring to move. Nobody passed by: they were off the pathway. The fog deadened sound as well as sight. It was cold and damp: the fog was in their throats and in their lungs.

Presently the fog got into their brains as well. Then one of them, the stronger, began to have visions and to see spirits which marched past, a procession of devils who mocked, and of women who wrung their hands and wept—then more devils and more weeping women. She kept none of these visions to herself but kindly com-

municated them to her companion, who had slipped down and was crouched, clinging to the rail, on the cold ground.

"They are the women who seek for work and find none, Katie. Look at them, there is one as old as Miss Stidolph and here are two like Miss Augusta and Miss Beatrice, but they haven't got their annuity, and there are two like ourselves. The devils mock them and drive them with whips. Oh! it is dreadful to see them. Do you hear what they are saying? 'This is what you were born for: nobody wants you: there is nothing that you can do: you will have to go on like this all your lives: you will live an immense time: every day you shall feel hunger and privation and disappointment. There is no love for you: there is not any hope for you of being cared for and caressed, with strong hands to work for you. No. No! these things are for other women not a bit better than you.' Are you listening, Katie?"

Katie moaned in reply.

"We shall not go on being driven with whips, Katie, because we are going to die. Shall we be killed by the black fog and starvation? Or shall we die a quicker way? Think of another night in such a fog and without Dittmer beside us."

"Katie," she repeated, "think of another night out in this cruel place."

Still there was no answer.

"Katie!" she stooped and lifted her head, "Katie! are you dead yet? Are you so happy as to be dead?"

"No—I wish we were dead. Oh! Lily—Lily—how long—how long? Will Dittmer never come? The seat is cold: he is so good. He took off his coat and laid it over me. Dittmer is very good to us."

She was lightheaded: exhaustion and cold made

her forget where she was. She thought she was still on the bench in the Park waiting for Dittmer to come back.

"She is faint with hunger," said Lily. She instinctively felt her pocket. There was in it a rough crust, the last of the threepenny-worth of bread. She gave it to Katie, who devoured it greedily.

"Are you better, dear? Do you think that you could stand? Do you think that you could walk a little?"

"Where?"

"It is not far—I should think about half-a-mile. This time I know that I can find my way. I see it in my head, every inch, clear as if there were no fog, though it is as black as night."

"Where, Lily? Do you mean"—she trembled, she rose and stood beside her friend—"do you mean?——"

"It is the Embankment, dear. That is the place where women go to end their sufferings. The poor woman who has lost her virtue: the poor shirtmaker who has lost her place: the poor lady who can get no work: that is the place for all of us. One plunge and it is all over—all the sorrow and all the disappointment."

"But after death?"

"After death I shall ask why we were forced to the Embankment."

"Lily, I am afraid. It will be so cold."

"We shall not feel the cold one bit. Think of another night! Think of the rest of the day! Think of day after day like this! . . . Katie, you shall hold my hand. Come."

She dragged Katie away, walking with the strength of madness, as fast as her trembling friend could go, sometimes hurrying her, sometimes encouraging her, sometimes reproving her.

I know not how she found her way or by what strange trick of brain she was enabled to go straight to the Embankment at the point where it begins at Westminster Bridge. She took the shortest way through the Park and along George Street, never halting or considering or hesitating for a moment any more than if it had been a day of clear brilliant sunshine. Yet she had before lost her way simply in crossing from the corner of the railings to the Buckingham Palace Road.

"Only a few minutes now, dear. Oh, Katie dear, we shall die together; we will not let go of each other's hands. Remember that. The water will roll over us, and in a moment we shall be dead and all will be over. You will not die alone. We shall go into the next world together. No more trouble, dear. Perhaps you will join Tom and be happy. I think he must be waiting for you somewhere. It is the shortest way to reach him. And as for me—why—they say that eye hath not seen nor can tongue tell the happiness that we shall find there—and it seems to me that all I want is rest and to be sure that I shall have food to-morrow. You must not think of the plunge, dear—the river is not a bit colder than the air: think of last night: think of to-day: think of the night before us——"

"Lily," said Katie, stopping, "they are having service in the church by the Abbey: listen. Oh! it must be the evening service. They are praising God and singing hymns—and we are out in the fog and the cold and going to kill ourselves."

"Yes: I could not sing any hymns just now."

"Lily, let us have one prayer before we go."

"No—leap first and pray afterwards; there will be plenty of time to pray when we are sure that we shall not have to come back to this miserable world any more." She dragged the other girl

along with her—past the Abbey—straight down to the Embankment. “Hush! Katie. Don’t speak now. This is the very place.”

She stopped at one of the landing places, where the steps go down into the water.

“The tide is running up,” said Lily; how did she know, because they could see nothing? “It will carry us up the river: it will roll us over and over. Don’t let go my hand, Katie: it will kill us in a moment, and then it will drive us and beat us and bang us against the piers of Westminster Bridge, so that no one will be able to recognise us when they do find us. And so it will never be known what became of us. Dear Katie, dear Katharine Regina—poor Queen without a penny—give me one kiss. Hold my hand. Now you shall be with your lover in a moment and all your sorrow shall be over. Hold my hand and run down the steps with me. Quick! Quick! Hold my hand hard—harder. Quick!”

She drew Katie to the steps, crying out to her to hasten and to hold fast and dragging her down to the river; Katie was too weak to resist, mentally and bodily. And all around her lay the thick black fog like a wall of darkness.

Did you ever think what it would be to be shut up in such an Inferno as Dante’s in a thick black fog, a darkness wrapping you round as with a horrible cloak from which there was no escape? All day long these girls had been sitting in such a fog, without food, and before them they heard—and now saw with eyes of madness—the rush of the river which would mercifully take them out of the fog and land them—at the foot of the golden gates?

“Quick—Katie—quick. Don’t let go. On!”

The fog lifted a little, suddenly, at this moment. Before the girls stood a figure, black and gaunt,



which stretched out two long arms and said with harsh and strident voice :

"No, my dears. Not this time you don't."

Then Lily loosed her hold of Katie's hand and threw out her arms in a gesture of hopelessness.

"Oh!" she cried, "God will not let us live and He will not let us die."

Then she turned and fled, leaving Katie alone.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### In the Morning.

KATIE stood for a moment stupefied. In front of her, shadowy, like a ghost, rose this man gaunt and tall: by the lifting of the fog she saw that he was in tatters. What was he doing on the steps in the dark? And Lily was gone.

"No, you don't," he said to her. "I thought there'd be some of you coming along to-night. Is it hunger working up with the fog, or is it remorse and despair?"

Katharine made no reply. Where—oh, where was Lily?

"If it's hunger and the fog, you'll get over it when you've had something to eat. In course of time you'll get used to hunger. I'm always hungry."

"Who are you? Let me go—let me go."

"Not this way, then," he replied—for she made as if she would rush at the river—"not this way, Pretty! Don't do it. Have patience. Lord! If you'd gone through as much as I have, you'd have patience. Don't do it."

As he spoke the black wall of fog rolled between them again. Katie stole away under its protection, but she heard him repeat as she retreated: "Don't do it, Pretty. Have patience."

It is now nothing but a memory of the past; but sometimes the gaunt and tattered figure of this man, holding out his long arms between her and the river, returns to Katie's mind and stands up before her: she sees him blurred in the fog and the dim lamplight: she hears his voice saying, "Don't do it, Pretty. Have patience!" Who was this man, this failure and wreck of manhood—and why did he lurk in the blackness upon those steps? Then her misery comes back to her again, her dreadful hunger and cold and weariness and desolation, and Katie has—change but one letter and the pathetic becomes bathetic, pathos turns into bathos—has to "lie down"—woman's grandest medicine—until the memory of that night leaves her again.

The fog was so black again that she had not the least knowledge of the direction she was taking. Under each lamp there was a little yellow gleam of light. Beyond this a black wall all round it: when she stood under a lamp it was just exactly as if she were built up and buried alive in it with a hole for a little light through yellow glass in the top.

Sometimes, steps came along and faces came out of the black wall and looked curiously at her as they passed and disappeared. It was the face of a young man making his way home and marching confidently through the fog: or it was the face of a policeman who looked at her searchingly, asked her if she was lost, told her how to get back to the Strand, and went on his beat: once it was a girl of her own age who stood beside her for a few minutes and looked as if she wanted to speak and

then suddenly ran away from her. Why did she run away? Why, indeed? And once it was a very ugly face indeed, which greatly terrified her, a man's face, unshaven for many days and therefore thick with bristles round the mouth, a face with horrid red eyes and red swollen cheeks.

"Have you got the price of a half-pint upon you?" he asked roughly.

"I have not got one penny in the world," she replied.

Lily in fact had all the money belonging to them both—ninepence.

"You've got your jacket and your hat. Gimme your jacket and your hat." He proceeded, in the language common to his class, to touch briefly on the injustice of suffering an honest man to go about without a penny in his pocket while a girl had a jacket and a hat which might be pawned. Perhaps he forgot that it was Sunday. But other steps were heard, and the creature of the Night slunk away.

Katie knew that she was still at the Westminster end of the Embankment, because the great clock struck the quarters and the hours apparently quite close to her.

The night was still and not cold. She was afraid to move outside the little yellow circle of light: but she could no longer stand: she sank to the ground, and leaning against the lamp-post she fell into a state of half consciousness. The place was quite deserted now, even by the birds of prey who prowl by night, and even by the homeless who come here when there is no fog and huddle together for warmth. When she lifted her head again and opened her eyes, cramped and cold, she saw that the fog was lifting and rolling away. The greatest horror of all—the long day and night of darkness was passing away—a few minutes more, and the

long line of lamps upon the bridge on one side and the Embankment on the other stood out clear and bright: the sky was clear and studded with stars: the air was pure again. To look round and see things once more, to breathe again the pure air, brought refreshment and relief. Katie got up and looked over the wall upon the river running at her feet.

She remembered that she had been very near to Death—a shameful, wicked, violent Death—the Death of those whose wicked lives have driven them to despair. One more step and she would have plunged into the dark waters rushing and tearing up the stream with the tide. She tried to picture to herself what she had escaped: she recalled Lily's words; she would have been, by this time, a dead body rolled over and over, knocked against the piles of the bridge, caught by the ropes of barges, banged against the boats. At last she would have been picked up somewhere: no one would have recognised her and she would have been buried in the paupers' corner, forgotten for ever. But imagination, like reason, refuses to work to order unless it is fortified by strong food. The words she recalled and the picture she conjured up conveyed to her soul in her exhausted state little more than a trifling addition to her misery. When one is on the rack a touch of toothache would be little heeded. She shuddered and turned and slowly crept away. The great clock struck three. Lily was lost now as well as Dittmer. She was quite alone in the world, and penniless. But the fog was gone: the black wall of darkness had rolled away.

I know not where she wandered. It was no more beside those black waters, but along the streets—silent now and deserted, save for the occasional step of the policeman. It is strange to think of the great City with all its four millions of

people asleep and the streets empty. Even the worst and the wickedest are asleep at three in the morning. It is the hour of innocence: the Devil himself sleeps. No one met the girl as she walked aimlessly along. She was so tired now that she had no room for any other feeling. She could no longer think or feel or look forward or dread anything. She sank on a doorstep and fell asleep again.

At five o'clock she was awakened by the hand of a policeman.

"Come," he said, not unkindly, "you mus'n't sleep in the streets, you know. Haven't you got anywhere to go?"

She got up and began to understand what had happened. Another day was going to begin: she had spent two nights in the street. Another day! And she had no money. Another day—oh! how long?

"I have nowhere to go," she said. "And I have no money."

"Won't you go home to your friends?"

"I have no friends."

She did not look in the least like most of the girls who have no friends.

"Haven't you got any money at all?"

"I have no money, and no friends, and no work ——"

Then this policeman looked up and down the street suspiciously, as men do who are about to commit a very bad action. There was nobody looking: there was nobody stirring yet: no one would believe in the bare word of the girl unsupported by any corroborative evidence: he would never be found out: *he did it*. He put his hand in his pocket and produced a shilling—a coin which is of much greater importance to a policeman than to you, dear reader—at least, I

hope so—and he placed this shilling in Katie's hand.

"There!" he said. "You look as if you were to be pitied. Lord knows who you are nor what you are—but there! get something to eat at any rate."

Then he marched stolidly away, and Katie sat down again upon the doorstep and burst into tears. She had not wept through all that long night in St. James's Park—to be sure, she had Dittmer then for protection: she shed no tears all the long dark and dreadful Sunday: she had been dragged by Lily to put an end to her life without tears: but now she sat down and sobbed and cried because the one unexpected touch of kindness, more than the cruel scourge of misfortune, revealed her most wretched and despairing condition.

"In the darkest moment, my dear"—she heard the voice of Miss Beatrice plainly speaking—not whispering, mind, but speaking out plainly—"in the darkest moment when the clouds are blackest and the world is hardest and your suffering is more than you can bear, GOD will help you, and that in the most unexpected way."

It was a very little thing: a shilling is not much: but it touched her heart as a single ray of sunshine lights up a whole hillside. And so she sat down and cried, and presently rose up and went on the way by which she was led.

My friends, we live in an unbelieving and sceptical generation, and the old phraseology is laughed at, and there is now, to many of us, no Father who loves and guides His children and orders their lives as is best for them, as we were once taught to believe: all is blind chance—even that policeman's shilling—even what followed, this very morning.

Katie's wandering feet led her to Covent Garden



Market, where the coffee-houses are astir and doing good business long before the rest of the world is thinking of the new day's work. She went into one and had breakfast—a substantial breakfast with an egg and a loaf and a great cup of hot brown coffee. Then—she went to sleep again, and another good Samaritan befriended her. It was the woman who waited—only a common, rough-tongued, coarse creature—but she saw that the sleeping girl looked respectable and that she looked tired out: and she let her sleep.

It was past eight when Katie woke up. *Made-moiselle de Samarie* was standing before her.

"I—I—I beg your pardon," said Katie, "I have been asleep!"

"You've slept for three hours and more, Miss. Pretty tired you must have been to sleep in all this racket."

"I've been walking about all night because I had no money."

"Have you now? All night? Just think! And a lady, I should say—well now, Miss, if you'd like to brush your hair and wash your face and make yourself tidy upstairs, you can."

Was there ever a better Samaritan?

Katie followed her. She would have cried again, but that she was stronger, being no longer hungry. But she kissed that woman of Samaria when she came away, and when Fortune smiled upon her once more, she sought her out and shed tears when she found that the good creature was gone and that no one knew where she was to be found.

Then, refreshed and strengthened, and with renewed hope and with sixpence out of the policeman's shilling in her hand, Katie went forth again for the third day's tramp.

She thought that perhaps if she went back to St. James's Park she might find Lily waiting there for her, or perhaps Dittmer Bock.

The homeless and the penniless wretches who slept upon the seats were all gone now, dispersed for another day of vagabondage and of seeking, of stealing and lying; of wandering and enduring. But the seats were not empty. The morning was clear and bright: a beautiful autumnal day when the few flowers that are left put on their brightest colours and the yellow leaves stop falling. The seats were now occupied by the people who have nothing to do. They form, I believe, a class apart; they make a society of their own: they know each other and no doubt form attachments, get married, have children, and grow old and die. But, until they die, they never leave the Park any more than the ducks. It is curious and interesting to reflect that there should be a race among us a race apart who spend their whole lives in St. James's Park, and never do anything except sit on the free seats, doze away the sunny hours, lazily read the papers, converse with each other with intelligence, but without enthusiasm, lean over the bridge and watch the boats and the ducks, stand about the approach to the Palace and look at the ladies going to the Drawing Rooms, assist at the playing of the band at ten o'clock, and never do any work at all. Yet they live and are fat. Somebody must work for them unless the laws of Nature in their case are suspended.

These people, therefore, were sitting about, but there was no Lily, and there was no Dittmer Bock. As for the latter, he had got back early in the morning from the Great North Road into which he had been beguiled by the Demon of the Fog and he was asleep in bed, but already dreaming that it was time to get up and dress

and go off to the City, there to conduct the office correspondence in French, German, Swedish and Russian, until the evening came when he should be free to find his way back to St. James's Park and search again for Kätchen.

Katie walked slowly up and down the whole length of the walk. Dittmer Bock, she now remembered, must be in the City at his office. If she only knew where that office was! There was no sign of Lily, anywhere. She left the walk and went into the Park. There she sat down and tried to think what was to be done next.

There came along presently an elderly lady dressed very neatly in a black silk dress and black silk mantle, with bugles, a jet brooch, and a little black leather hand-bag. She was in black, not because she was in mourning but because she liked it. She went with a sort of hopping movement like a sparrow, and she had a sharp sparrow-like face with very bright eyes. When she saw Katie she stopped before her and made a leisurely but not impertinent survey of her.

"My dear young lady," she said, "you were here all Saturday night."

Katie made no reply.

"You appear to be what the world calls Respectable. You are, doubtless, still in Society. Few of those who turn Bird Cage Walk into a Hotel are still in Society."

Katie remained silent.

"My dear young lady, I saw you, on Saturday night. I am often here watching the people. You were with another girl and a young gentleman. Why were you three out all night? It was cold too. If it was a freak of youth, let me tell you, young lady, that such freaks may bring

you into trouble. And to-day you are here again, alone. What does it mean?"

Katie shook her head, but made no reply.

"I come to this Park a great deal. There are many most remarkable persons who use it. They are nearly all out of Society, you know"—why did the old lady whisper this information?—"men and women too—out of Society, you know. With a history, of course. I please myself by learning their histories. They illustrate the working of Fate. It seems to me, my dear, that you are meeting your Fate early in life. I did so myself. I could tell you most wonderful histories to illustrate the workings of Fate. My own is very remarkable, for instance. Quite unique. And yours too, no doubt. Where is your friend?"

"I do not know. I have lost her."

"Ah! To be lost in this great City if you have no money is to court your Fate. I could tell you several stories about that now. Turn your eyes to the next bench but three, the second person sitting on it. Don't let her think she is watched. I could tell you a very curious story about that person. My dear, Fate is all about us: we do not know our Fates or we should go and drown ourselves: we should, indeed. I should, long ago, if I had known my Fate. I have sat about the benches at night and talked to them—and watched and listened. My dear, they all curse their Fate. So do I. It is most remarkable."

Katie rose and fled. This old lady was like a dreadful nightmare. She walked out of the Park, afraid to stay in the awful place any longer; the place where men and women assemble to curse their Fate and to wish that they had drowned themselves long ago—why, what had she herself tried to do?

Then she thought that she would go to Doughty

Street and see her old friend Mrs. Emptage again. Perhaps there might be some help even from that poverty-stricken household.

She walked all the way from St. James's Park to Doughty Street. It is a good step. You go along Long Acre and Great Queen Street, and Lincoln's Inn Fields and through Gray's Inn. For a girl who has been walking about all night it is a longish walk. Fortunately she had eaten a good breakfast, but it was at five in the morning. When Katie arrived in Doughty Street she found that the Emptage family had gone away, and they had left no address.

It was about eleven o'clock. Katie turned away wearily. By this time she had fallen into that strange state of mind when nothing seems to matter. The Emptages were gone: and they had left no address. This intelligence affected her very slightly. She saw that there was a gate on the left-hand side of Gray's Inn open and that it led into a garden where were trees and grass and seats. She turned in, took the first bench and sank down upon it. At the other end of the bench sat a young lady dressed in deep mourning.

"You look tired," said the young lady presently, "you look ill—are you ill? Can I be of any service to you?"

Katie turned upon her, in reply, eyes so haggard, a face so worn, so full of despair and misery, that this young lady started and shuddered.

"Tell me," she said, "what it means. Tell me what is the matter with you."

Katie tried to speak. But she was past speaking. Her head dropped and she would have fallen forward upon the ground, but the young lady caught her in her arms.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## The Nubian Desert.

**T**HERE was an encampment at the going down of the sun in the Desert.

The great Nubian Desert is a terrible Desert indeed. It covers a weary waste of country which, if you will examine the map, you will find lying between the Nile—that part of it where the Second and Third Cataracts are marked—and the Red Sea. It is reported by those who have been across this Desert—the number, for certain reasons, is now much greater than of old—that there are mountains in it, all arid and bare, level plains covered with sand, rocky passes, and low hills surrounding small plains of sand. The sand is everywhere. It is a hot and a thirsty country: those who live in it are a thin, parched, and dried-up people, who are said to regard their abominable country with affection. Some of them, those who belong to the seaboard of the Desert, are not Arabs at all but pure-blooded descendants of the blameless Ethiopians. They speak the same language as their forefathers, but they have changed their religion a good many times. First they left off worshipping the Gods of Troy and those of their cousins of Tyre, Sidon, Ascalon, Zoan, and Kadesh: they then became Christians and had a beautiful ecclesiastical Establishment all to themselves till the Arabs crossed the Red Sea and persuaded them, by those arts which have always proved successful in the conversion of a people, to



renounce Christ and follow the Prophet. They eventually turned out the Arabs, but they remained faithful to the Prophet. The encampment was one of this people, but as to the manners, customs, language, and folklore of the tribe I am sorry that I cannot describe them in detail, because I have never been among them, and the two white men who have lived with them and might have learned so much never even mastered the language and made no notes. They were greatly unlike the German traveller who was lately taken prisoner on the south-east coast of the same continent, and kept on making notes of what he observed, even on the way to be "hotpotted," and being rescued from the very jaws of death, preserved these notes, which are a precious addition to anthropological lore as well as an example worthy of imitation by all travellers.

When the sun sets over the great Nubian Desert he paints the mountains and rocks all manner of colours, but especially those which have to do with purple, crimson, and yellow: he places the same colours, only paler, in the sky, and he condescends to light up the level sands with the most beautiful and wonderful mirages. This evening, for example, those of the people who cared to look for it might have seen in the south-west, and apparently within easy access, a most inviting oasis of verdure and beauty incomparable in any climate. Saw one ever such green grass, such blue lakes, such waving palms, such a suggestion of bubbling springs, green shade, fragrance of flowers, balmy rest, and universal delight? Yet there were two in this encampment who gazed upon the scene without joy and without admiration.

"There it is again, Tom," said one of them, "a

very creditable mirage. You would swear that it was real, wouldn't you?"

"Ay. This is the Land of Tantalus. We are always thirsty, and there are always dangled before us the water and the fruits which we may not drink."

It was not a luxurious camp; the water the people had to drink was warm and brackish; the only protection they had against the night-dews were the cotton sheets which by day the men wore as mantles or wrapped round their bodies; the food they had to eat consisted chiefly of dates. The men were armed, for the most part, with spears and shields, though there were old guns among them. One would certainly not think the tribe or the encampment worthy of the notice of history save for the fact that right in the middle of the camp there were sitting, without any protection of white cotton tent, the two Englishmen whose remarks on the mirage you have just heard. They were prisoners of war, whose lives were spared when the Egyptians were all speared. Why they were not massacred with the rest has never been found out. Perhaps it will remain a secret for ever.

They were pretty ragged by this time, having been prisoners and on the tramp for six months. Their coats hung upon their shoulders in long strips, which they would have torn off but for the protection afforded against the sun; the legs of their trousers had been mostly torn off in strips in order to provide bindings for their feet, from which the boots had either dropped or had been taken off. To walk barefooted in the African sands is for English feet very nearly the same thing as to walk upon ten millions of sharp-pointed needles all red hot. Even the eleven thousand British virgins of Aachen had only

one pin for the whole lot to dance upon. But suppose they had been ordered to dance upon ten millions of pins apiece! Their flannel shirts were in strips; as for watches, revolvers, glasses, water-bottles, belts, and everything else, these had long since been taken from them. Of all their kit they preserved only their helmets, which, as bound in common gratitude, had in return preserved their owners' lives against sunstroke. Their hair had grown long and matted, like the black ringlets of their captors; their faces were covered with thick beards, and six months' wanderings in the desert on a diet principally composed of dates and brackish water, had taken the superfluous fat from their figures, sharpened their features, given their eyes a peculiar brightness and eagerness unknown in countries of civilisation, where the human eye is apt to swell with fatness, and doubtless added ten years to their lives should they ever get home.

The scene before them, apart from the mirage, was a landscape of low hills and rolling ground; everywhere was grey sand with, for vegetation, tufts of dead desert-grass. The two Englishmen sat side by side in silence. There was nothing to say. When a man has been made to tramp, without aim or object, for six long months, during which he has had no news of the outer world, and has been all the time hungry and thirsty, he is not inclined to talk. To-night the two men were so tired with the day's march that they sat without speaking a word, until one of their captors brought them supper consisting of some bread and dates with a draught of water.

"Tom," said one of them, "is the finest champagne at the club comparable with a good pull of warmish water in such a place as this and after such a day's march?"

Tom was at the very moment taking that pull.

When they had eaten their supper they began to talk.

"Tom," said the first, resuming the conversation of the preceding night, "my opinion remains the same. We have come back somewhere near the place where we started."

"You see," said Tom, "that if you should happen to be wrong our goose is cooked without the least doubt, and we shall either starve in this infernal Desert or be captured again, when we shall most certainly be stuck."

"Yes—but I am sure that I am not mistaken. I remember the outline of these hills the very first day we were brought in, when we expected to be killed every instant."

"It may happen any minute as it is. These fellows are not in a hurry, because we are always in their hands. As for me, I very well remember the funk I was in, but I forget the hills."

"Tom, *it is the same place*," the other man repeated earnestly, "I am sure it is. We are within a few hours of the Egyptian fort. I believe they have come back here in the hopes of meeting other tribes and getting up another massacre if the Egyptians can be lured outside their walls. Tom," he lowered his voice to a whisper, though no one could understand what they were saying, "within half a day's march is freedom, if you want to win it. Do you understand that?"

"It is not a dark saying, old man. As for my *wanting* to win it," he replied—"you're a soldier. Take the command and tell me what to do. I will obey if it leads to death, McLauchlin, on the bare chance of getting out of this."

"We will wait until they are all asleep. They have left off setting a watch. Then we will quietly slip away and make for the coast. I am sure we

are near it. I can smell the sea; though it is only the Red Sea. If we are lucky we shall sight the fort and the ships."

"And suppose we take the wrong turn and go north instead of south?"

"In that case, Tom, we shall travel round the whole world, twenty-five thousand miles or thereabouts, before we get to the fort. At twenty miles a day it is only twelve hundred days, or four years, allowing us to rest on Sundays."

"I should give up trying for the fort and strike off north-west, where London is—and Katie," said Tom, with a curious catch in his voice.

"I've got a Katie too," said the man called McLauchlin. "I'd go north-west with you, old man. Oh! Tom," he laid his hand on the other's shoulder, "to be free again! To go home and tell them we are not dead after all. Do you sometimes think of them crying over us?"

"Have I thought of anything else during the whole of the time? And my girl, you see, has got no one, and now she must be friendless. All day long for six months I have heard her sobs. If we do get away from this prison—if ever there is a real chance of freedom again, I will tell you about her. I couldn't here . . ."

Tom said no more.

The sun went down at last with an undignified bob, as one who is long in making up his mind to go and only goes at last because he is obliged. Immediately afterwards the colour went out of the sky and out of the hills, and then, because there is not much twilight in the great Nubian Desert, the night fell, and the children of the Desert ceasing to chatter and to scream and to quarrel, lay down upon the sand, still hot with the day's sun, and were all asleep in a few minutes. Presently, Captain McLauchlin touched Tom's shoulder,

and they arose and looked round them. By the light of the stars they could see the sleeping forms all round them. Only half a day's march to freedom ! But suppose McLauchlin had made a mistake ? Suppose he had been deceived by the outline of the hills ? Then, as Tom truly prophesied, they would either starve slowly—it is a lingering complaint, including the torture of the burning heat of the sun and a maddening thirst—or they would be recaptured, and then they would be certainly speared for good. Freedom, however, is worth some risk ; for the sake of freedom men have run the chance of many deaths, and those even more cruel than hunger and thirst in the Desert. These two men might have fled in the same way nearly every night. What use ? One might as well leap overboard in mid-ocean and hope to swim ashore as fly from an encampment in the heart of the Desert. Yet even that leap has been sometimes taken, when it has been thought better to sink down in the dark green waters, to lie quiet for ever and undisturbed among the shells, than to be any longer a slave or a convict. With freedom within half a day, who would not risk even that march round the world of which Captain McLauchlin had spoken ?

A fortnight later the same two men lay in two beds in the hospital of the friendly Fort, now garrisoned by English as well as by Egyptian troops.

The half-day's march had in fact turned out to be a march of two or three days with no food and no water, because, you see, they did take that wrong turning. When the fugitives were picked up by accident and a good way from the Fort, they were very terrible to look at, black and gaunt and fierce-eyed with thirst and hunger and the heat of the Desert under the fierce sun and the glare of



the water, because they were upon the shore of the Red Sea. Already they seemed to hear the flopping of the vulture's wings and the bark of the jackal, when they were rescued by a party of English officers come out to shoot.

At first, nobody knew them. They were brought in and put to bed, and for a week or so they could not even tell their story. When that story was fully heard, those that listened marvelled and were sore astonished, because their escape and return to their friends was like a resurrection from the tomb. Long since, it was supposed, their bones had been bleaching upon the sands with the bones of the poor Egyptian soldiers who could not run fast enough to get away. McLauchlin had been gazetted as killed; Tom Addison, war correspondent, was reported killed. By this time their friends would even be going out of mourning.

"Six months, Tom," said McLauchlin this afternoon, the room being quite quiet and shaded and the pain well nigh gone out of their feet, which had swollen up and behaved in a most abominable manner and inflicted disgusting torture upon them. "Six months, Tom, may go a long way to make a fellow forgotten even by his girl. They've got the telegrams by now, and by next week or thereabouts they will have the letters. I wonder——"

"So do I," said Tom.

"Whether Katie will have forgotten?"

"Just what I was going to say," said Tom. "There's been a good many odd things happening in the last six months or so, old man. When they brought us in and my head felt like one inflamed balloon and my chest like another, you began to talk of your Katie and I began to think we had got mixed up somehow. You've got a

Katie and so have I. They can't, I suppose, be the same girl, by any accident?"

"Mine is named Katharine Regina."

Tom fell back on his pillow with a groan.

"So is mine," he said. "We have got mixed up."

"Katharine Regina Willoughby, mine is."

"Katharine Regina Capel is mine," said Tom. "There's a chance for us yet. But isn't it odd that there should be two girls christened Katharine Regina?"

"Perhaps they are cousins. There is always a Katharine Regina in the Willoughby family. Who are your girl's people?"

"She hasn't got any people. She is absolutely without any relations."

"No people?"

"No. There is nobody else like her in the whole world. When I was taken from her she lost the only person in the world who cared for her. Poor Katie!"

"But she must have had parents and they must have had cousins."

"Most girls have. Mine did not. She had a father, and his name was Willoughby Capel."

"Willoughby! That is strange, too. What was he?"

"He was a gentleman by profession. He was an idle, selfish, luxurious, useless creature, in reality. He had been in the army, and he lived on some allowance or annuity or something, the nature of which he never told his daughter. Nor was she told anything about her relations. Her mother was an actress, but Katie was not permitted to know her name, and she died in childbirth. There is the whole story."

"It is only the beginning of one. Why did the man keep his daughter in ignorance of her relations?"

"Well, you see, there is one reason which immediately suggests itself to the adult. It is based on that adult's experience of the wickedness of human nature. The man must have done something which cut him off from the family, or else perhaps all the family must have done something simultaneously and so cut themselves off from him. There are a good many actions which are still recognised as being dishonourable even in this lax age. There are so many, in fact, that there are enough to go round a very large family, and very likely it was the cousins who disgraced themselves with one consent. But I doubt it, sir."

"Tom, it's a very curious thing, and perhaps it means nothing and is only a coincidence, but there was a fellow in my Katie's family who was formerly in the army and turned out a very bad hat indeed. He had to send in his papers for something he did. I never heard what it was, but the rest of his family would have nothing more to do with him. He was always in debt, I know, for one thing, and he was pretty unscrupulous as to getting out of debt."

"You would suggest that this amiable person was my Katie's parent?"

"Perhaps it is only a coincidence. Still, there are other points. This gallant officer of ours married an actress. So did yours. Whether there were any children or not I do not know. Then, however, come the names. Why should he call himself Willoughby for his Christian name? Because it was his surname? Why should he call his daughter Katharine Regina? Because it was a family name? Again, it was Katharine Regina Willoughby, my Katie's great aunt, who kept our man going. She used to say nothing about it, but it was known in the family that she did so. Tom,

I firmly believe that your Katie is my Katie's cousin. What sort of a man was her father to look at?"

"He was an extremely handsome man, tall and with regular features, and is called an aristocratic-looking man."

"All the Willoughbys are tall and extremely handsome. My Katie——"

"And mine as well," said Tom.

"What colour was his hair?"

"It should have been grey, but he dyed it. I suppose he kept to the original colour, which was a dark brown. His eyes were brown."

"Good heavens! Tom. This is wonderful. I have no doubt at all that he was old Miss Willoughby's favourite good-for-nothing nephew. What a strange thing it is that we should have been lugged about together over that accursed Desert for six months and that we should be engaged to two cousins!"

"I daresay you are right," said Tom. "But as my Katie doesn't know of your Katie, I don't see how it helps her at the present juncture. Stay. Good heavens! If I had known this six months ago I need never have come out at all."

"Why?"

"Because the fortune to which I did not succeed was to go to the heirs of this very Captain Willoughby, and, if you are right, it is my own Katie after all who will have it! Old man, that escape which you planned and carried out meant more than our lives, more than the happiness of the women who love us; it meant, only I did not know it, the restoration of Katie to her family and to her fortune. Good heavens! It is wonderful. It is truly wonderful."

Here the conversation ought to have ended;

the curtain ought to fall at this point. What followed was weak—very weak.

“Old man,” Tom went on, “if I had known that all this was involved in our getting safe to this haven of refuge, I believe I should never have pulled through with you. I should have been too nervous. The sun would have killed me; I should have fallen down with heat apoplexy; I should have stepped upon a flying serpent; I should have irritated a winged dragon; I should have died of that awful thirst; I could never have survived the overwhelming desire to get safe home in order to give that poor girl back to her friends and her fortune. As for me, I’ve been dead for six months. She has had time to get over the shock, but she little thinks, when I do come back, what I am bringing back with me—beside myself.”

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## CHAPTER XV.

### Joyful Tidings.

HARRIET ROLFE had never, before this evening, felt what it means to be truly happy. For she was as well dressed as she desired to be: that is to say, as she had learned to be, because she never soared to the heights of those ladies who resign themselves into the hands of their artistes, but arranged, considered, designed and chose for herself, which is much the best way if you have a touch of genius. Next, she was in society: that is to say, she sat at the head of her table, presiding over the first dinner-party given by Mr. and

Mrs. Hanaper Rolfe—the second Christian name came in handy—in their new house.

There were no ladies: but as yet Harriet had not arrived at the stage of desiring the society of ladies. Her own sisters, cousins, aunts and early friends could not, she knew, be asked to meet gentlemen, and, besides, she liked to be the sole object of their admiration. She was conscious that few women can be certain of calling forth this admiration. In a crimson-velvet frock with dead-gold bracelets and necklace, with her tall and shapely figure and her comely cheek, she looked indeed a splendid creature. James regarded her with pardonable pride.

There were four guests: one, a certain baronet whose acquaintance James had made in a billiard-room which he frequented, where the marker and the habitual players called him Surennerly. To be called Surennerly must be true enjoyment of a title. He was a handsome man, still young, of five-and-thirty or so, with rather a weak profile. But his eyes were sharp, like unto those of a hunter. His private fortune was said to be nothing at all, and his enemies declared that he lived by pyramids and shilling pool. Certainly he was a good player and he played a good deal, perhaps in the interests of science and to keep up his skill. He “moved,” as they say, chiefly in the society of those actors and actresses who are not invited to the houses of the Great. The only occupation, besides that of billiards, for which Nature had fitted him, was perhaps that of a genteel shopwalker.

There were besides, three other old friends of the turf and the billiard-room invited in order that they might see for themselves in what magnificence their former pal, once so hard-up, was now living. Nowhere else, certainly, would



these gentlemen get such rare old Port: such East India Sherry: such a bottle of Chateau Lafitte. For Uncle Joseph's cellar was one of the good old kind, such as is now seldom found, in which the wine has been laid down affectionately and with forethought, as if life was going to be continued far beyond the usual limits.

The magnificence was so great and the presence of the crimson velvet so overwhelming that the conversation flagged during dinner. There was only one topic on which Sir Henry could converse and he was uncertain how it would be received if he was to start it—namely, actors' gossip and green-room whispers.

When Mrs. Rolfe rose the host pushed about the bottles. But the evening was "set dull:" no one said anything which called forth a spark of interest. At last Sir Henry made a remark which, though he did not mean it, fell like a bombshell and wrecked the house.

"I saw a War Office man just now," he said, "he told me that they have just had a telegram about those two fellows who were supposed to be murdered."

"What two fellows?" asked James, quickly looking up.

"Captain McLauchlin and the newspaper chap. It seems they were prisoners and have got back. It will be in the papers to-morrow."

Jem poured out a glass of port and drank it. Then he took another—his face was very white and his hands trembled. The three old pals, who knew how he had come in for his money, said nothing but looked at each other with meaning. Then, as if resolved to make the most of an opportunity which would probably never return, they fell upon the Port with avidity, drinking about a bottle and a half a head. If this was

true here was an end to Jem Rolfe's magnificence. Soon he would return to the old haunts and be as hard up as his neighbours; as keen over a pool; as hot for a tip; as ready to borrow; as loth to lend; and as eager in the pursuit of what they and their like fondly call the "oof bird." Pity that this excellent Port should be again secluded from the thirsty world! On the other hand, as has often been pointed out, the satisfaction with which men regard the misfortunes of their neighbours soothed their souls. Poor old Jem! He looked pale and his lips trembled. He also winked with both eyes several times.

"The newspaper chap, Sir Henry," he said with dignity, but huskily, "was—I mean is—my first cousin."

"Oh! I am sorry I spoke so hastily."

"Not at all. The news naturally surprised me. We had all given him up long ago. Poor old Tom! He had no brother and we were brought up together." This was a decoration, so to speak, of the truth. "To think that he should turn up again, alive and well—you said that both were alive and well—and well?"

"My War Office man certainly said that both had been prisoners and had escaped."

"Let us hope that both are well. There is a girl somewhere about, who will be a happy woman to-morrow when the news comes. Not to speak of another woman not a hundred miles from this house."

He was doing it very well, thought the pals. Then they began to talk of the strangeness of arriving home when one has been reported dead and been given up for lost and mourning has been ordered and worn—and wills proved—conversation during which their host winked his eyes hard many times.

Before they went upstairs he made a little request of them: "My wife," he said, "was very fond of my Cousin Tom." She had never even seen him. "She is a very sensitive person—highly strung and that, you know," he winked again, "and the news of his death affected her terribly. Do not breathe a word of this joyful intelligence. I will break it to her carefully to-morrow morning, so that she may not lose her night's rest."

Going upstairs the three pals nudged each other. A hitch with the elbow is often better than speech and communicates more than mere words can hope to do and in much less time. I have sometimes thought that to be dumb, considering the expressive power of the eye, the head and the elbow, is an affliction much lighter than many others. The pals meant that Jem was keeping it up first-rate.

Upstairs, Harriet gave her guests tea and a little music. She knew how to play simple accompaniments and had a strong full voice of rather coarse quality which would have done well for the burlesque stage or the music hall—and she sang sentimental and pathetic ditties.

"You ought to be on the stage, Mrs. Rolfe," said Sir Henry. "By George, you ought!"

"Oh! Surennery, I don't sing half well enough for that," she replied.

"You sing ten times as well as most of them. And you look twenty times as well as any of them," he added, in a lower voice.

"Oh! Surennery!" She looked at her husband who was gazing into the fire with an expression, as she read it, of determined grumpiness. "That is one of your compliments."

"It is not, Mrs. Rolfe—it is the truth. There isn't a woman on the stage who has got your looks

or your voice. You should go on the boards—you should indeed; lots of ladies are going now."

Then he sat down himself and sang two or three French songs, quite certain that no one would understand the words.

"I do think, Jem," she said when her guests were gone, "that when you bring your friends upstairs you might do better than sit in a corner and look as glum and grumpy as an undertaker at his own funeral. Unless you've had too much wine."

"Yes," her husband replied, "it is all over, my dear. Now we can go back to the fun of the old days again——"

"What do you mean?" she asked sleepily.

"And to Stockwell again, if you like."

"What do you mean, Jem?" She was wide awake now.

"And to the jolly old days of fighting the landlord."

"Jem ——" She turned quite pale, for her husband's face was serious. "Jem! for Heaven's sake, what has happened? Has a will turned up?"

"Worse than that."

"Have you been losing the money, betting?"

"Worse than that, Harriet."

"What—worse?"

"The very worst: the most unlucky thing in the world. Harriet, he isn't dead after all."

"Not dead! Tom not dead!" She clutched the back of a chair with both hands. "Not dead?"

"Tom has turned up again, none the worse. He has only been a prisoner among the Arabs and he got back safe. I don't quite know how long it takes to get from Suakim to London, but we may

be pretty certain that he'll cover that distance in the shortest time on record."

"Oh!" There was a conscientious, a heartfelt ring about the interjection. The deepest grief, the most profound despair, the most bitter helplessness—all were there.

"Well, Harriet," her husband continued. "It's no use shutting our eyes. Out we go, my dear. We needn't go just yet: when Tom comes home, he shall find us keeping the house warm, because we couldn't get a tenant: and as for what we have spent, trust me for running up a bill of costs and throwing dust in his eyes."

"Jem—you are a fool."

"Why, my dear?"

"What does it matter about the past? It's the future—oh, my God! it is the future. What shall we do?"

Jem, who had been walking about the room, sat down and faced her with a look of bewilderment.

"I don't know, Harriet. If I only pull through this business—why—it's a——" She understood not one word of what he meant. "Good heavens! If I pull through—it seems hardly to matter what becomes of us afterwards."

"We shall have to go back to the old wretched, miserable life. Where are we to find the money even to pay the rent? We've got no furniture: we've got no money: we've got no practice—oh! Jem—Jem—how are we to live?"

She sunk into a chair and gasped.

Her husband was still occupied with his view of the situation.

"The future may take care of itself, Harriet. It's the past that I look at. Nobody can prove that I knew that girl to be the heiress—thank goodness, that can't come out. Very well then—

let us face the situation. Tom was dead. Before Tom went away he gave me a power of attorney. Well, I am the natural heir. I advertised for the heir-at-law of Captain Willoughby Capel and no one replied. Then Tom was killed—I naturally succeeded—I am his only cousin, on that side . . . Then he comes home again. I say to him, 'Tom—my dear old Tom'—being much affected—'How glad I am to restore all to you. The heir cannot be found, and you had better sit down and enjoy the fortune.' If he does, I have got the knife into him, because the Trust money ought to go back to Miss Willoughby's heirs. If he does not, he will make me the solicitor, and if I know my way about, some of that money shall stick."

"What are you talking about? What girl? What Trust?"

"Well, Harriet, there was no use telling you: but if you hadn't been a woman you would have asked a few questions about the sudden accession. You see I am one of the heirs to Tom's estate—no one can get over that; one of them, and the others are in New Zealand—but it's loaded with a Trust and we did not know to whom that Trust ought to be handed over just when he went away. Well, you see—first of all, I promised Tom solemnly that what was left when that Trust was paid should be given to his girl."

"You promised to give away your own?"

"You're a fool, Harriet. It wasn't my own. It was his. If I hadn't promised he would have made a will on the voyage, and given it to her. Besides, I didn't put that promise into writing. Well—after Tom went away I found that even if this Trust money was paid there would be an uncommon tidy bit left. So of course I wasn't going to regard such a promise as binding—not likely."

"Well; and did you pay the Trust?"



"No—I didn't. You see, my dear, there's this certain fact about the Trust, that not a soul knows anything about it except Tom and me. It should go to the heirs of a man who is dead—if not, it would have to revert to the heirs of the original donor . . . Very good—the awkward thing is that I haven't paid it to either; and now Tom is come back and there will be the devil to pay."

"Oh! Who is the heir?"

"I found out some time ago. It is no other than Tom's own sweetheart, Katharine Capel. She doesn't know and Tom never knew——"

"Where is she?"

"I don't know. That is the thing which will save me. I don't know where she is. Pretty ragged and down on her luck she looked the only time I saw her. It was then that I found out the truth."

"Jem," said Harriet, in the direct manner peculiar to her sex, "you are a scoundrel."

Her husband made no reply.

"You have stolen all this Trust money. And as for the rest, we were only part inheritors."

"Don't be a fool, Harriet. It was for your sake. How else would you have got that crimson-velvet dress? Don't call names, but see if you can't help me out of this mess."

"How are we to live, I want to know?"

"Lord knows! The first question is—how will Tom take it? And how can I put it to him?"

"When we go from here, where are we to go? What are we to do? You have deceived me again. You ought to have told me everything. You ought to have behaved honest to that poor girl, whatever else happened. I never thought that I should be able to call my husband——"

"Be quiet, damn it!" he cried. "Stop nagging, Harriet, and listen. There are lots of things in

the house which may go out of it with us. They'll never be missed. My aunt's jewels—Tom doesn't know anything about them—take and put them up with your own things. Send away the servants and then we'll pack up all we can. Hang it! There's my uncle's old silver mugs and things, we'll have them too. There's a lot of valuable books. I don't know much about books, but I know some of them are worth money. There's the pictures. The house is full of pictures. A lot of them can go without being missed. I don't suppose Tom ever went into the bedrooms——”

“Is that the only way you can think of to keep your wife?” Harriet asked with scorn.

“Well, if it isn't good enough for you, find another way. How did I keep you before?”

“You were spending the last of your money. When it was gone, if it hadn't been for Tom's death, I suppose you would have had to become a billiard-marker, because no one certainly would employ you as a lawyer. It was a horrible life that you made me lead. A thousand times a day I wished I was back at my quiet old stall. Oh! I *will* not lead that life again.”

“Well, Harriet, strike out a new line for yourself. What do you purpose to do?”

She tossed up her arms and gasped for breath.

“Oh!” she cried, “and I thought it was all over and we were going to be respectable. Can I never sit down and be happy and well-dressed, with a proper house and servants and no anxiety about the money? Oh, Jem! what a fool I was—what a dreadful fool—to marry you!”

“Perhaps, my dear, you will remember that on the other hand you've had a really beautiful four months. I wonder how Tom will take it. How shall I put it to him? You see, he's quite sharp enough to guess that I meant to stick to it.”

"Oh! He ought not to have come back. After all these months he ought not."

"That, my dear, is quite true. I am now going downstairs for a pipe and a glass of whisky and potash. Come down with me if you are able to talk rationally. Come, Harriet,"—he offered to lay his arm round her neck, but she pushed him off. "Don't be cast down; we will find out something. Look here: Tom's girl is going to have the money. I will make out such a case of my zeal in proving her to be the heiress that we may get a lump out of him. Besides, there's the jewels and the mugs and everything that I mean to stick to—and the bill of costs. Don't be downhearted."

She pushed him from her with the vigour which one might expect of her proportions.

"Oh! well—if you choose to be a vixen, you may. Don't think, Harriet, that I'm going to slave and worry on account of a she-devil. If you've got nothing better to do than to show temper—as if I wanted Tom to come back—I shall . . . go and have my pipe by myself."

It was a tame and impotent conclusion, but she turned upon him and looked so fierce that he collapsed.

In the small hours of the morning James woke up suddenly. The blinds were up and the moon was streaming in at the windows. Harriet was standing at the window in her nightdress.

"Harriet," he cried, "what are you doing?"

"I've had a dream, Jem," she replied. "A dreadful dream. I thought that you were tried by the judge and sent to a convict prison for robbery and I was left destitute. And I'd got a knife in my hand"—she held up her hand and showed a dagger which gleamed in the moonlight; it was only a little ornamental paper-knife, but it flashed like steel—"and I was going to kill myself and

have done with it. You were a convict working at Portland, Jem."

"Come back to bed this instant!" he said sternly. "You and your dreams—come back and go to sleep. . . ."

She obeyed and went to sleep again calmly and sweetly. But her husband's teeth chattered and he trembled and shook, because his actions would, he was conscious, bear such a construction. And Tom was on his way home, doubtless having much wrath.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### Tom's Return.

**T**OM did cover the ground between Suakim and London in the shortest time on record. The story of his captivity and escape of course reached home before him in scrappy fragments which made everybody talk of the two prisoners. So that they were the Men of the Moment. It is a great thing in one's life to have been, if only for once, The Man of the Moment; the honour is one which is bestowed upon people variously distinguished, and may be shared with Mr. Gladstone or with Charley Peace. But Tom neglected his opportunity, and refused even so much as to read a paper at the Royal Geographical.

It was one morning at the beginning of November, about a fortnight after that awful fog, that Tom arrived at Victoria. He had sent telegrams from Suakim, from Cairo, from Brindisi, and from Paris, all addressed to Harley House. He would not burst upon the poor girl without warning.

She would hear of his safety from the papers; she should hear of his return from his telegrams. Poor girl! Poor Katie! His eyes filled when he thought of her trouble and sorrow on his account. But now all the trouble was over. She knew that he was safe. She was happy again—poor friendless Katie!

Six o'clock in the morning, and not yet quite light. You cannot call at a house, even to see your sweetheart who has supposed that you are dead, at six o'clock in the morning. The lazy maids are not up at six in a London house—they are only turning round in the sheets uneasy because they ought to be getting up and because they are possessed by that pleasant, teasing, winning, masterful, persuasive, coaxing Devil (I know not his name) who haunts the bedrooms of young people at times when they ought to be getting up and when the clocks are striking with all their might, and holds them as if by strong arms in bed, and weighs down their eyelids and makes them helpless with sleep as by enchantment, in so much that for the sake of another hour in bed they are ready to brave everything, even a month's notice. It is recorded of a certain mediæval housemaid—I think the story is in the autobiography of Guibert de Nogent—that one day, under the malign influence of this Devil, she actually sold her soul for one more hour's roll in the sheets. This was duly granted to her. She is now punished—*là-bas*—by having no sheets at all to roll in.

Six o'clock in the morning. Tom put his kit into a cab and drove to a hotel, the only place where a welcome awaits the returning traveller at six in the morning. Then he made up his mind not to hurry things. Katie must have time to get up. He would restrain himself and call at nine.

He would have a tub after his long journey, get into a change of clothes and take breakfast first. Even the Troubadour gaily striking his guitar on his way from Jerusalem would take his breakfast before he sought out his lady. Tom took his tub and his breakfast; after that, he took a pipe and the morning paper. It was only eight o'clock when he had quite finished both. But he could wait no longer, and he set off to walk.

You know how, when one goes to keep an appointment, or to execute some important business, the mind shapes out beforehand exactly what is going to happen, and you prepare in readiness what you will say, and what the other man will say, and what you will say next. Nothing is ever done without this preliminary imagining and picturing of it to oneself as it is going to happen; and by the universal consent of all mankind nothing ever happens at all as it has been previously mapped out and imagined. Generally, the thing receives a totally different manner and shape at the very outset; one is put out at the first start; the other side sets the whole thing agree after you have rounded it off and made it dramatic, with all the "fat" of the dialogue given to yourself, and basely says things totally unexpected and totally unprovided for.

Tom pictured in his own mind the sweet face of his girl and her lovely eyes looking into his once more—he knew that they would be full of tears—and her dear hands laid in his. He tried to think what she would say, but he did not get beyond her face and her eyes and her hands. Of these he was quite sure, and he clung to them. Half-past eight. He was opposite Harley House. The door opened and one of the residents came out. It was a girl employed in a shop as cashier; her hours were from nine till eight. His heart began



to beat violently. Suppose it had been Katie! He would wait no longer.

"Miss Capel, sir?" asked the girl who was a new comer. "There is no lady of that name here."

This was the unexpected; this it was which threw him out altogether. For that Katie should have gone away was the last thing he expected.

"She was staying here six months ago."

"Yes, sir. I've only been here ten days."

"Will you give me her present address?"

"I'll ask the Matron, sir."

She left him in the hall, and presently the Matron herself came to him.

"Miss Capel left here three weeks ago," she said.

"My name is Addison."

"Oh!" she said, "you were engaged to her and you were killed in Egypt. I know now. Oh! sir, I am so sorry. Because I don't know where she is gone to nor what she is doing."

"Why did she leave?"

"She left because she had no money to pay for her lodgings and could get no work. There was nothing but trouble for that poor girl. First she lost you, and it would have moved the heart of a stone to see her going about so heavy and sad. Then she lost her place. And then she tried and tried, but what with its being summer-time when there is no work going, and what with the many poor young ladies everywhere looking for work, she could find none. And so her money got lower and lower and lower, and—Oh! sir, don't look like that—you'll find her somewhere."

"Tell me all. Let me hear everything."

"She had a great friend here, another girl named Lily Doran. They stood by each other and shared their money as long as it lasted. Then one morning they went away together."

"Where did they go? They must have had some place to take their things."

"They had no things. They had sold or pawned everything—their watches went first and their clothes last."

"Oh! Katie!"

"I would have kept them, but it is against the rules. No one is allowed to stay here a day after she is unable to pay her weekly bill. Harley House is not a Charitable Institution."

"Gone! Where could she go?"

"They must have gone to their friends and relations."

"Katie had neither friends nor relations."

"Could she have gone to your friends?"

"I have only one relation in London. She may have gone to him for help. She knew his address."

"Go and enquire, sir. Don't be downhearted. Young ladies don't get lost in London. She *must* be somewhere. Give me your address, so that if we hear anything—some of our ladies may have heard of the two girls—I will enquire and let you know."

Tom turned sadly away. Katie gone and in great distress. Nobody knew better than himself how friendless she was. She had no money left. She had to go.

Perhaps she had gone to his cousin. The more he thought of it, the more likely this appeared to be. Jem had promised faithfully, in case of his death, to give her whatever was over after the trust-money was paid. But she had no money. Therefore there was nothing left over. As for his cousin, Tom knew very well that he had no money of his own. He walked to Westminster, where Jem had his office; it was no use driving, because he would not be there before ten. When he got

there he learned that Jem had removed to New Square, Lincoln's Inn—his Uncle Joseph's offices. This seemed perfectly natural. He retraced his steps and walked all the way back from Westminster.

In the old office everything looked exactly the same as in the old times. The door was open, and behind the door sat the office-boy, who at seeing a visitor jobbed a pen into the ink and made pretence of being immensely busy. Within, the two grey-headed clerks did much the same thing with the difference due to their time of life; that is to say, they dipped their pens with dignity and looked wise.

In his uncle's office he found his cousin.

"Tom!" He sprang to his feet and seized both his hands, and laughed and grinned and made every possible demonstration of joy, winking hard with both eyes at the same time. "Tom! old man! welcome home! welcome! I was about the only man who always refused to believe that you were killed. Shake hands again!" he repeated the outward and visible signs of delight. "I always refused. Why? Because they never found your body—the body itself is a piece of evidence that should never be forgotten. And none the worse? Let me look at you. None the worse, I believe."

"No," said Tom, "none the worse, except for worry and anxiety."

"Ah! you worried about not being able to escape."

"Well; one looked to be speared every day; and one expected to get sunstroke and one worried about the people at home; and the food was pretty bad, I can tell you, and there seemed no chance of escape; and—but there . . . Where is Katie?"

"You mean—oh, yes—I had almost forgotten—Miss Capel. I don't know, Tom. How should I?"

"I left her at Harley House where she proposed to remain. But she has gone and left no address."

"Why, bless my soul!" said Jem suddenly recollecting, "she called here—how long ago? About four weeks, I think—to ask if there was any hope left of you. I could give her none, poor thing! none. It was no use telling her that I myself believed you to be alive, was it?"

"She called—here? How did she look?" Tom asked hoarsely.

"She looked, as far as I can judge, very well and very beautiful. In deep mourning, Tom, but very well and very beautiful."

"Did she—did she seem in poverty or distress?"

"I observed nothing." Jem shut his eyes and opened them several times rapidly. "She was not, to be sure, dressed for the Park. But she said nothing about any other distress than her distress on your account."

"Poor Katie! Jem, you made me a solemn promise before I went away—a solemn promise."

"I did, old man—I did. If I had observed any signs of distress—if she had given me the least hint of trouble in that way—I would—I would have parted with the bottom dollar to relieve her. I would indeed, Tom."

"Thanks, Jem." Tom gave him his hand. "Then she said nothing about being in want?"

"Nothing. Not a word."

"Yet it must have been about that time that she left Harley House."

"Tom," said his cousin earnestly, "I hope that you believe me when I say that I remembered that promise."

"I am sure you did," said Tom.

"I have never forgotten it," he went on confidently. (This assertion to be sure was perfectly true. He had never forgotten that promise.) "I assured you that when the Trust was paid I would look after her."

"No—you would give all that was left, if there was any, to her."

"Just so. I fully acknowledge the promise. Well, Tom, the Trust has not been paid off. I have advertised everywhere for the heirs of Captain Harry Willoughby, but have had no answer."

Perhaps he advertised in the dark arches of the Adelphi or in the tunnels of the Metropolitan Railway, because those advertisements could never be found in any of the ordinary channels.

"As for your Uncle's estate, Tom, I found it in a devil of a mess, and it will take another six months I dare say to unravel it all and get at a clear statement of how you stand. But there will be more left over than I thought at first. I can promise you that, Tom. A good deal more. So much is certain."

"Oh!" cried Tom remembering. "As for the heirs, I have made a discovery. Oh! a wonderful discovery."

His cousin turned pale.

"What discovery, Tom?"

"I have found the heiress. It is none other than Katie herself, Jem, I am sure of it—I am quite sure of it. Oh! if I had known before I went away!"

"Is it possible? Miss Capel herself?"

"Her name is Willoughby. But where is she?"

"I don't know: but she can't very well be lost. She must have seen the telegrams about your

return—you 've been spread out fine and large for the last week or so, old man—and she'll be sure to write to you or come to you. She knows your address of course."

"She knows my old lodgings and she knows the address of the paper."

"Don't worry about her, Tom. Go to the paper and report yourself. And you'll find a letter waiting for you."

"I'll go at once."

He rushed out of the office.

An hour later he returned.

"There's no letter, and I've been to the lodgings. No letter has been sent there, and nobody has called since you took away the books and things."

"There are your books, Tom." He pointed to the shelves where they were arranged. "They are safe enough. But as for this young lady—it looks odd, but then you see, lots of women never look at a paper at all, while there's others who'll read every word from beginning to end every day, and wish there was more—especially more law cases."

"What shall we do, Jem?"

"There's only one thing to be done. Advertise. Leave it to me."

"I suppose I must," said Tom unwillingly.

"Leave it to me. I will soon find her for you if she is above ground. And now, Tom, let us go back to that discovery of yours."

"The heiress is none other than Katie herself."

"So you told me before. How do you know, eh?"

Tom briefly related the points—we know them already—which had led him to connect Katie with the Willoughby Trust.



"Strange!" said his cousin. "It seems plausible; it may be true."

He was at the same time thinking how this new turn of affairs suited his own line of action, in a very delicate situation. Fortunately he had told no one but Harriet of his own discovery. It now seemed as if nothing could fall out better. Of course the girl would be found immediately—probably through his own agency; he would be the benefactor; that would create a bond of gratitude and friendship.

"It may be true," he repeated. "What kind of man was this Mr. Capel, or Willoughby, if that was his name?"

"A tall man who had once been handsome and was still good-looking; about fifty-six years of age; with aquiline features and eyes very clear and keen; he used to dye his hair, which was brown."

James Rolfe rang a bell. One of the clerks came in.

"Will you tell this gentleman," he said, "what sort of man to look at was Captain Willoughby—you know—the man who came once a quarter to draw his money?"

The clerk described him almost in the same words as those used by Tom.

"The description corresponds," said the lawyer with the astuteness of his profession, which never fails to perceive that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, and that two and two make four. "I remember him quite well, and I recognised in your description the man who used to come here for his money. But I wanted the corroboration of a second witness. Upon my word, Tom, I begin to think you must be right. Remember that we could find no relations to Mr. Capel; and when I advertised for the heirs of

Captain Harry Willoughby, we got no answer because, as we know pretty well, his own family have long since cut him off. I believe, Tom, that you are right. In that case—lucky dog!—the inheritance will be yours after all!”

“Katie’s you mean.”

“The same thing, my dear boy, in spite of the Married Women’s Property Act. Just the same thing; well, I’d ask you home, but Harriet—who is a woman of a highly sensitive nature—she used to see your ghost at night when you were first reported as killed—has become so touched with thankfulness at your safety that I do not think it would be wise to bring you home without first preparing her.” He thought of the moonlight dagger scene and was afraid. “After you went away there were no tenants. I took temporary possession of the house in Russell Square. I hope you approve.”

“Oh! yes. Why not? Somebody must live there and why not you? Besides, it is not my property, but Katie’s.”

“Well, Tom, we don’t know yet. Besides you gave me a power of attorney and of course I have been administering the Estate. But I should not like to do anything without your knowledge and approval.”

Oh! James! and the cellar of wine! and the jewels and the old silver mugs and the books and the pictures!

“Find my Katie—only find my Katie, Jem.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

## The Search.

WHEN the advertisements began. They did not appear, this time, in dark tunnels and on inaccessible peaks, but were duly displayed in the second column of the *Times* and in the "agony" columns of the *Standard*, *News*, *Telegraph*, *Post*, and *Chronicle*. James was now honestly anxious in his own interests that the girl should be found. He was satisfied that Tom would ask no nasty questions when the statement of his affairs was presented to him, and there was a great difference between handing over the Trust to the heirs of Miss Willoughby deceased and retaining the papers so as to act as the family solicitor for Katie after she was found. This, together with the indirect methods, so to speak, which he had already proposed to his wife, seemed to be a natural and easy way out of the mess. But every day, as this young man contemplated the pile of papers connected with the Estate, he cursed the luck that brought his cousin home again. And every day when he went home—they remained at Russell Square, but the establishment was reduced to one miserable old woman, and there were no more dinner-parties—Harriet received him with gloomy looks and sullen speech. As if it was his fault that Tom had returned! He put this to her, but she made no reply, except by that kind of look which makes a husband at once wrathful and small.

The advertisements began. Before long the whole country knew that one Katharine Capel, aged

twenty-one, had disappeared: that when she was last seen she had on a black jacket, a black woollen dress, a hat trimmed with black velvet, and a grey 'kerchief round her neck: that she was five feet five in height and had light-curling hair, regular features and grey eyes: and that she was accompanied by a young lady, also missing, named Lily Doran, of dark complexion, dressed in brown serge, with a black jacket and a red handkerchief. Yet the whole country combined was unable to produce either of these young ladies. For some five weeks or so the advertisements were continued. You shall hear, directly, how they came to be discontinued. They produced three letters.

The first was from Mrs. Emptage, and was of no use, because her information ceased with the day when Katie left the house: but it was an honest, good letter, full of kindness towards the missing girl, and Tom went to see the writer. The Emptage family had removed from Doughty Street to a small semi-detached cottage near Kensal Green, where there is a whole village of cottages let at eleven shillings a week each, inclusive of water-rates and taxes. No servants are kept in these cottages, and the children go to the Board school, where they are much better taught than by governesses like poor Katie. Mrs. Emptage wept over her lost governess and her vanished gentility and the reduced salary, mixing up all together, till the series of disasters became one and indivisible, as if Katie in leaving the house had carried out in her handbag the fortunes of the family and the family pride and dignity. But she could give no guess of what had become of Katie.

The second letter was from Dittmer Bock, who asked for an interview.

His information carried on the fortunes of the two girls for twenty-four hours after they left Harley House. But, alas! it confirmed the news of their utter destitution. In the fog he had lost them and he knew no more. Whither had they strayed, hand-in-hand, that hapless pair, in the yellow fog of that terrible Sunday?

"I have seeked," said Dittmer. "Ach! Himmel! Heilig! I have seeked in the bureaux where the names are taken of ladies who want places. Nowhere do I find her. Whither is she gone? What does she do? Honourable Herr War-Press-Correspondent, what does she do?"

It came out, in subsequent conversations and examination, how he had passed the night with them and pledged his credit—the credit of a German clerk on forty pounds a year!—with the friendly baker for them.

"Her heart was broken—Ja, Herr War-Press-Correspondent—broken when she heard that you were killed. Afterworts she never smiled except with the children of the gracious Lady Emptage. Broken was her heart. Once I ventured to ask would she graciously give me only one of the fragments. But she would not part with the smallest piece. All—all—are yours, Herr War-Press-Correspondent. Now you are back recome, and she, who should have returned to the frühlung and the time of roses—where is she? Love waits for her, und die Hochzeit—the High time—but where is she? I ask the everlasting stars."

There was no reply from the stars, who of late years have ceased to interest themselves in the fortunes of men, and are now silent, perhaps unmoved spectators, and refuse by any combinations of their own to reveal the future or to guide the conduct of those who consult them.

There was, however, a third letter. This came

from Harley House, and was signed Beatrice Aspey. It was written in the old-fashioned straight-lined Italian hand which was formerly the only kind permitted to women. Tom called upon the writer, who had nothing to tell him but the history of the last weeks of privation and fruitless hunting for work while the slender resources of the two girls wasted away too rapidly. But she told him as well of Katie's patience and her grief. And she spoke with so soft a voice, a manner so gentle and a face so sweet, that his heart was drawn towards her.

"And, oh! sir," she concluded, "I am sure—I know from my experience that the two girls must have gone for days and days with nothing to eat from breakfast one day to breakfast next, because their breakfasts were all paid for beforehand, you know. And when they went away Katie told the Matron that they had not enough, between them, to pay for another week. And they had parted with all their things."

"Oh!" Tom groaned. "My poor girl! My poor Katie!"

"All they took away with them they carried in one small handbag. I don't think they had even a change of clothes."

"Make haste—tell me all."

"That is all. To look for work week after week: not to find it: to starve: to grow shabby and poverty-stricken in appearance: and at last not to have money enough to pay for bed and breakfast even in such a cheap place as this! That is all, except that other girls have friends, who will in the end, though often grudgingly enough, do something when it comes to the worst. These poor girls had no friends. There were never two such girls in the Home before. Their dreadful friendlessness brought them together. They shared what they had: they suffered together: and, oh!



Mr. Addison, they went out into the streets together hand-in-hand, quite penniless. Don't cry, it is dreadful to see a man cry. Perhaps they have found friends."

"But where—where—where? And why don't they answer my advertisements?"

"Why, girls like that never look at papers except to see if there are any vacant places for which they can apply. What do they want with newspapers? What interest can you expect a girl to have in the world when all her thoughts are centred in the difficulty of finding food?"

"Into the streets, friendless and penniless," Tom repeated. "Poor Katie! Poor child! Was there no one in this House, where there are twenty women and more, all of whom knew of her dreadful trouble, to do her the simple charity of keeping her from starvation? Not one?"

"There are thirty women in this House. Not one among us all," Miss Beatrice answered with quiet dignity, "is ever rich enough to give away half-a-crown. This is Poverty Hall. This is the Refuge of those who are broken down early or late in life: we are beggars all, except my sister and myself, who live on a little money which allows us to give a penny but never a shilling. Oh! there are pitying hearts among us. Do not doubt that; sometimes one's heart is like to burst with the miserable pitifulness of it all and the want of power to help it."

"Yet—so little would have done to help them over a week or two."

"How do you know that some of the other women here were not in the same plight? Do not condemn us hastily, Mr. Addison. Only the night before they went away, we made a little collection for them, and between us we raised a little purse of a few shillings for them. Alas!

when I got up in the morning to give it them, they were gone. And we have never seen or heard anything of them since. I wanted to tell you this. It was not by our hardness of heart that they were compelled to go away. It was my carelessness and laziness—I ought to have got up earlier."

"It was fate. Everything was against them."

"They have been looked for in the British Museum where the girls went sometimes in search of copying work. But they have not appeared there once. None of the Museum people have seen them. We have enquired about them in every likely place, but there has been no sign."

"In the streets—think of it!—friendless and penniless!" Tom repeated.

"Yes—say it again, so that when you find her, you will rejoice the more. Mr. Addison,"—she laid her hand on his—"I am an old woman now, and I have seen a great deal—my sister and I together—of trouble and privation. We too have been reduced to walk the streets all night for want of a bed and to go hungry for want of food. Yet we were never utterly forsaken. Your Katie is not quite friendless. The God who rescued you from the Arabs will save her from the Devils—who destroy soul as well as body—of the street! Have faith, young man. Lift up your heart—oh! lift up your heart unto the Lord!"

This language is not so common as it used to be, and is seldom used for the comfort and solace of a London Journalist, who may chronicle the emotions of religion, but is not often expected to feel them. Yet the words and this gentlewoman's sweet voice and her steady eyes so full of faith, fell upon his soul like rain on a thirsty soil.

"The other girl," she went on, "was of a different nature—she was less patient than Katie: she cried out and complained of the bitterness of

her lot : she was without hope, though she was so young : the future was always dark to her. I tremble for Lily : but for Katie I have more than hope, I have confidence."

"Yet she has never been here to see you since her departure. And that is over two months ago and more."

"No : I cannot understand why she has not come. But patience. You have yourself been rescued in a manner so miraculous that you may hope that a lesser miracle may have been wrought for Katie. When I think of ourselves everything seems possible. We were getting old—too old for teaching where they prefer young and active girls—and we were resolving that we would soon give up trying and go into the workhouse——"

"What? Had you, too, no friends?"

"We had cousins. Do you know that it is sometimes better to become a pauper than to accept the bread of grudging charity? Do not ask me about our cousins. Yet there was one whom we remember with gratitude. For he left us a legacy of sixteen hundred pounds in the Funds. It gives us fifty pounds a year. We lodge in this house : we have learned to live very cheaply on fruit and such things : we have each other's love, and we have kept our books. The winter of our days, believe me, is hallowed by such sunshine as never fell upon our spring. Think of us, young gentleman, when you tremble for the fate of Katie."

Not a trace of the girls. Think how extremely difficult it is to effect a disappearance unless one has a trusty confederate. The face of every man and woman in the world is known to many : there are marks upon his person : his dress and speech and gait are all known to his friends : if he is "wanted" by the police, there is always somebody

who is ready to give information: landladies of lodgings, innkeepers, waiters—are all eager to get the reward. With what infinite trouble does a runaway murderer keep himself concealed for even a week! And yet here were two girls, advertised for, a large reward offered, their appearance described, their stature given, their dress when last seen, their names, and the probable nature of the occupation, and not a trace of them to be found. Perhaps they had left the country. But they had no money. Or they might have gone into some secluded place. But it seemed impossible that there should be any place in Great Britain so secluded that no newspaper should reach it. And now the newspapers had taken up the matter and every day there were speculations, letters, suggestions, and advice poured into the columns. There are, it is true, many women who do not read papers. Domestic servants, as a rule, do not: many factory women do not: needlewomen, shirt-makers, match-makers, jam-makers, buttonhole-makers and their kind do not: many shop-girls do not: there are artists who do not allow the serenity of their souls to be ruffled by the newspapers: there are young ladies whose minds are wholly occupied by their Things: there are actresses who care for only one column in the newspapers. Yet if these women do not, their employers, friends, lovers, and companions do. And all the world was talking about the two missing girls.

They had not been murdered, so far could be learned from the inquests and police offices: they might have been abducted—but this was a thing only whispered: they might have accepted some post abroad and gone off by steamer: they might . . . You may imagine a thousand possibilities. Murder, suicide, abduction—nothing was forgotten, nothing was left to the imagination. The adver-

tisements went on: the reward was doubled: a hundred letters were received from people, hoping to get that reward, informing the advertisers of two girls recently arrived in the neighbourhood. And everybody now knew that the War Correspondent who had been reported killed, but turned up again unhurt after a few months of captivity, was engaged to one of the young ladies who were lost. And day after day the papers announced that no news had been heard of the missing pair.

It was unfortunate that they were advertised for together, because nobody had any suspicions at all about a single girl. It was the pair who were looked for, as if they were Siamese-twins or double-bodied Nightingales. Yet, as we know, they had been long since separated.

It was early in December that the first real discovery was made.

Dittmer Bock it was who made it by means of a favourite amusement of his, which was cheap, pleasant, and attainable every night even by the clerk on forty pounds a year. He used to go to the doors of a theatre at eleven o'clock and watch the ladies come out. Heavens! How beautiful they look, to the crowd of poor young clerks, who gather about the doors to watch these Visions of another world! And how wonderful, how perfect, how stable, satisfying and complete does the world of Beauty, Wealth and Ease seem to the young men whose desires are so catholic and comprehensive and whose possessions are so small! One evening Dittmer stood upon the kerb contemplating this procession of fair women, filling his soul with sweet images, and wondering what it would be like to be transported to the land where such creatures roam free and fearless—suddenly, to the surprise of the bystanders and the indignation of the policeman, he burst through

the crowd and seized the hand of one of these Heavenly Visions.

"Lily!" he cried.

"You? Dittmer Bock?"

It was Lily. She was beautifully dressed and she was on the arm of a gentleman. There was no more beautiful woman in the whole Theatre than Lily, this evening.

She ought to have been proud of her dress and her opera-cloak and the admiration of the whole house, and the brougham which awaited her and everything.

But she snatched her hand away and blushed crimson.

"You, Dittmer Bock?"

"Who is it, Lily?" asked the gentleman with her.

"An old friend. One moment, Dittmer. Where is Katie? Don't tell her you have seen me."

"I do not know where she is. We cannot find her. We are looking for her everywhere."

"We were parted in the fog. I have not seen her since that night. It was in the fog. We tried to die together, Dittmer," she whispered—"we did, indeed, but we were not allowed."

"Come, Lily," said the gentleman, "we block the way."

He pushed her gently into the carriage and drove away, taking no notice at all of the clerk.

Dittmer ran straight with the discovery to Tom and was greatly astonished at the effect which the intelligence produced upon him.

This was the reason why the advertisements were discontinued.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## In the Workroom.

IN an upper room furnished with eight or ten sewing machines there sat as many girls at work. The room was well ventilated and warmed: the girls looked contented: there was no talking but every girl sat over her sewing machine and guided the work while the needle jumped up and down in that most surprising and wonderful instrument. In a smaller room at the back a forewoman was at work.

Downstairs, there was a showroom, quite a humble kind of showroom, in which one or two more sewing machines were at work. And at the back of this was a small office or sitting-room in which there were two ladies conversing. One of them was the lady who ran this concern. It was conducted on Co-operative principles, which is the reason why it has since been closed, because of all things in this world there is nothing more difficult than to persuade people to buy things at Co-operative productive stores, that is to say, where the producers sell their things without the medium of boss, chief, bourgeois, or master. Why this is so, it is impossible to understand, seeing that there can be no doubt in the world, first that all labour will, before long, work out its emancipation from the middleman, even the labour of those who write, and next that there is no single argument that can be urged against Co-operative productive shops, especially those of women's work, except the fact that they always fail. And they always

fail for two principal reasons: one being the astonishing hardness of heart which women display towards their working sisters, and the other the incompetency of the working women themselves.

This particular attempt was just then in the stage when a little feeble public interest in it had been excited by superhuman efforts of its friends and success seemed possible, though there were many anxieties. The two ladies in the office were discussing these anxieties and possibilities. One of them, the manager of the concern, a lady no longer young, had spent her whole life among the working women. She had now arrived at the very unusual stage of knowing exactly, not only what they say about everything, but what they feel. Lady Bountiful, you see, hasn't the least idea of what these people feel about things. She brings along a concert of the Kyrle Society and smiles around and feels good and goes away with a farewell smile. Sometimes she brings along other things. But she never becomes one of the people. She is always outside them.

"My dear," she said to the younger lady—it was the same young lady who had caught Katie on the bench as she was falling forward—"I really do think we have made a move."

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The above stars represent quite a long conversation about linen garments and orders and expenses and receipts, from the Co-operative point of view, deeply interesting.

"And how do you get on with your hands?"

"There is the usual percentage of stupid girls, lazy girls, and incompetent girls. I know exactly what to expect. The most satisfactory of all is the girl you brought to me—Katie."

"What is her full name?"

"I do not know—I have not yet asked her. She is quick to learn, obedient and ladylike."

"Yes. She is ladylike, poor thing! Perhaps she was formerly a lady's-maid."

"Poor thing!" the other echoed. "Without friends and without relations. Left to die. Oh! what a fate! What a punishment!"

"Yet her face is full of innocence and purity. Can such a face lie?"

"She said that she had no friends and no relations. What *can* that mean?"

"Let us go upstairs and see her."

They went upstairs where Katie sat at work before a sewing machine, quiet and industrious. She looked up and smiled as the ladies entered the room. The look, the smile, the very carriage of the head, were altogether different from the manner in which the other girls greeted the Chief. These girls were all what we call decent and respectable: some of them were comely: some were even pretty as London work-girls very often are, *petites*, with narrow sloping shoulders, small face and large eyes: some were country-bred, and showed it in their figures and the ample width of their shoulders: some had the manners of the shop: some, of the factory: some, of the London back street: some, of the slum: some, of the farm: some, of the servants' hall: none of them had the manners which were shown by so simple a thing as Katie's smile when she lifted her head.

She suffered no longer: she knew not, and had not the least suspicion, of the dreadful things that were thought and said about her by the ladies—yes, the very ladies—who had befriended her. She was in a haven of rest. She learned readily how to use the sewing machine: she even took

some kind of interest in the work: she sat steadily working all day: she gained a sufficient weekly wage and she had a room in a decent house recommended by the lady who ran the Co-operative Business. The other girls left her alone: she was a young lady who had somehow gone down the hill and got to their own level, and yet did not belong to them. All the day she sat at work, but the hours were not long: in the evening she was free to go home and sit in her room and read, or to walk about. At first she sat in her room every evening, but she had now begun to walk about a little. She hoped for nothing: she expected nothing: she desired nothing, except to earn the means of paying for a roof and a resting-place and food and clothes.

Not a healthy mood for so young a girl: but she had gone through so much suffering that rest was all she wanted. There are, in every person's life, times of suffering which are followed by times in which the exhausted brain sees things as in a dream and men as trees, walking, and pays no heed to aught that passes. This was Katie's state. She paid no heed. She did not enquire or care what was said and thought about her: she did not try to explain how she had fallen into such a helpless condition: it never occurred to her, most fortunately, to ask what was thought of her.

The young Lady, her rescuer, shook hands with her, though somewhat doubtfully—there are several ways of shaking hands, as everybody knows, and when a young lady shakes hands with a girl who has the manners of a lady, but has been picked up starving, and confesses to having no friends and no relations, a certain something—constraint, doubt, condescension, or encouragement—cannot but be remarked in the

manner of extending or withdrawing the hand. Chapters—whole essays—great books—might be written on the differences, shades, and grades of shaking hands, from the affable greeting of a Prince to the cheerful grasp which a workhouse chaplain bestows upon his sheep.

Katie, however, noticed nothing unusual in this welcome.

"You are quite strong and well again now, are you?" asked the young lady.

"Quite, thank you."

"Are you still living in the same house?"

"Yes," Katie replied, without interest in the matter. "They are quiet people who leave me alone."

"May I call upon you some day?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"It must be on Sunday, after service. I shall not interrupt you then. My name is Katie, like yours—Katie Willoughby. You will tell me yours, perhaps, when I call at your lodgings. I should so much like," she added in a lower voice, "to be your friend, if you will let me."

Katie made no reply. But her eye fell upon the girl's dress. There was a coloured scarf round her neck and a bit of bright colour in her hat and tan-coloured gloves.

"I thought," she said, "that you were in deep mourning. Was I dreaming? Sometimes a strange feeling comes over me, as if everything was a dream."

"You are quite right. I was in deep mourning. But oh! Katie, on the very day that I found you, the most joyful news that ever reached any girl came to me: it told me that the—the person for whom I mourned was not dead at all, but living, and I put off my mourning."

"Was it your lover?"

"Yes—it was my lover. Thank God, he was restored to those who love him."

"Come on Sunday," said Katie, suddenly interested. "I will tell you of all my trouble, if you are not too happy to hear it."

On Sunday morning Miss Willoughby called. But she could not hear the story that morning, because the girl lay in bed with some kind of fever. Her head and her hands were hot: her words were wandering. She spoke of the fog and of the night, and called upon Tom to come back and help her. But as for her story she could not tell it, because reason and will and knowledge and self-rule had left her brain, which was the abode of delirium.

They carried her to the Hospital for Women in the Marylebone Road. There was nothing to show where she came from or who were her friends. In her pocket—girls no longer, except in books, carry treasures in their bosoms—lay tied together a packet of letters. They were from a man who signed himself "Tom"—*tout court*—nothing but "Tom," and addressed her as Katie. What can be done with "Tom"? This Tom was madly in love with her. He called her every endearing name that a fond lover can invent: he recalled the past days of happiness together: he looked forward to the future. He was in a railway train: he was on board a ship: he was among soldiers: he spoke of natives: he spoke of Arabs—clearly, therefore, a Tom among Egyptians. Probably a Tom who had been killed. He did not somehow write like an officer: his letters contained no news; for that he referred her to the papers: all he had to tell his girl was that he loved her—he loved her—he loved her—and was always and for ever her Tom.

The Sister of the ward read these sacred letters,



and placed them, with a sigh that so much honest love should be lost, under Katie's pillow. Time enough to try and find out, if she grew worse, what had become of this Tom and who his Katie really was.

She did grow worse, but she had youth on her side and a good constitution, which had certainly not been spoiled by luxurious living or the want of exercise. She even lay at the point of death: had she died there would have been nothing to establish her identity, but those letters and her handkerchief marked "K.R.C." Then she would have been buried, and Lily's prophecy would have come partly true.

"She is better this morning," said the Sister. "Her head is cool. She has been sleeping a long time."

"She is more beautiful than ever in her weakness." It was Miss Willoughby who stood beside the bed with the Sister and the Nurse. "Sister, think of it! She told me she was without friends or relations! Is it possible?"

"It is certainly not possible," said the Sister. "There is perfect innocence in her face and—more than that—in her talk. We hear the delirious talk of women whose lives have not been innocent and we learn their past. This girl's mind is as innocent as her face. You might make a painting of that and call it 'Eve before the Fall,' or 'Una,' or 'Mary, the Sister of Martha.' She may be friendless, but . . ." The Sister shook her head and went away.

Miss Willoughby sat by the bedside and waited.

"No friends and no relations." How could a girl have neither friends nor relations? Yet to conclude that the girl deserved to have none was cruel and unjust. Miss Willoughby was ashamed

of her hard thoughts. Besides, she had heard from the Sister about those letters.

Then Katie opened her eyes again, and looked as if she could speak.

"Do you know me now, dear?" asked Miss Willoughby.

"Yes, I know you."

"You have been very ill. You are still weak. You must not talk much. But tell me your name."

"Katharine Regina."

"What?" Miss Willoughby started. "How did you get that name?"

"It is my christian name."

"What is your surname? What was your father's name?"

"Willoughby Capel."

"Willoughby—Katharine Regina! It is very strange. Have you any relations named Willoughby?"

"I have no relations at all."

Then she closed her eyes again.

"Leave her now," said the Nurse. "She is weak, and had better rest and go to sleep again."

Next day Miss Willoughby called again, bringing grapes. Every grape upon the bunch was a big tear of repentance because she had thought so cruelly of her patient. Only the patient never knew. When one goes about a city a great deal and meets with many experiences, most of them of a truly dreadful kind, one naturally draws conclusions which would seem to many ladies most wicked. In the same way the doctor, when you tell him certain things, at once suspects the very worst. Katie never knew.

She was sitting up in bed, already in a fair way of recovery.

"Are you strong enough to talk to-day?" asked Miss Willoughby.

"Oh yes. I can talk to-day. But I have only just begun to understand all that you have done for me. I cannot thank you yet——"

"Do not talk of that at all."

"You must have thought me most ungrateful when I was working at the sewing machine. But all that time seems like a dream. I only half remember it. You were in mourning first, and then you put it off and you told me something."

"I was—I was in the very deepest grief as well as the deepest mourning, for my lover was said to be dead—and now I am in the greatest joy and thankfulness because my lover has been miraculously restored to me. Ought I not to be happy?"

"I am so glad. My lover too is dead. But he can never be restored to me."

"Your lover, dear? Oh! You had a lover too, and he was killed, like mine. Oh!"

She took her hand and pressed it.

"I know his name, because the Sister read his letters in order to find out who you were. His name was Tom."

"Yes, it was Tom. And Tom is dead."

"Will you tell me something more about yourself?" she asked. "Not more than you want to tell. I am not curious indeed, but if I can help you . . . Oh! let me help you, because I met you on the very day that the telegram came which brought my lover back to life. In the evening when I went home—after I left you—they brought it to me. Oh! my dear—my sister brought it crying—my father kissed me—and my mother kissed me—and they were all crying and I knew not why—on the very same day when I found you. Can I ever think of that day without thinking of you, too? God has given you to me, so that I may

deal with you as He has dealt with me. And I can never let you go away—never—never.”

“Oh!” said Katie, deeply moved. “What can I say?”

“I shall never forget that day. Oh! how I rushed to tear off the black things and to . . . My dear, you are a part of that day. Now tell me more. You said your name was Katharine Regina. That is my name, too. There is always a Katharine Regina in the family. And I never heard of any other family which had those two names. And your father’s name was Willoughby Capel. It is so very odd that I have been thinking about it all night. Tell me more, dear. You said you had no relations.”

“No—I know of none. My father would not speak of his relations. I have sometimes thought that they quarrelled with him. He was once, I know, in the army with the rank of Captain, and he had an annuity or allowance, but I do not know who paid it or anything else at all about him.”

“What a strange story!”

“The annuity was not a very large one, and I had to give lessons. I was governess to a lady—oh! not a very grand person—whose husband was a clerk in the city. I went there every morning at nine and came home at five. She was a good woman and kind to me—I was more a companion and a nursery governess than anything else.”

“Well, dear?”

“My father died suddenly at the beginning of this year. But I was engaged by this time, and as I had Tom I was happy and full of confidence. I went to live at Harley House—a place where governesses can live cheaply.”

“I know the place. Sister, what did you say about her face? You were quite right. Go on, dear—I know Harley House.”

"Then a very curious thing happened. Tom's uncle died and left him all his money, and for a week we were rich. But a solicitor—Tom's cousin—discovered that all the money belonged to somebody else. So we were poor again, and Tom went out to Egypt."

"To Egypt?"

"Yes: he was a War Correspondent."

"Oh! Katie—Katie"—Miss Willoughby caught her hand—"tell me—tell me—what was his name?"

"His name was Addison."

Upon this, the young lady behaved in a very surprising manner indeed. For instead of saying "Oh!" or "Dear me!" or "How very interesting!" she covered her face with her hands, and Katie saw that she was crying.

"What is the matter? Why are you crying?"

"I am crying, my dear—oh! my dear, what am I crying for? It is because you are getting better. Go on, dear, I won't cry any more. Go on—Tom was his name, wasn't it? Poor Tom! Tom Addison, and he went out as War Correspondent and was killed by the Arabs at Suakim with an officer, Captain McLauchlin—but their bodies were never recovered, were they? Poor Tom Addison! Poor Captain McLauchlin! Poor girls who loved them at home in England!"

"Do you know all about it?"

"My dear, it was in the papers—but not your name. The world is never told more than a quarter of the truth. And none of the papers said a word about Katharine Regina."

"Yes—he was killed, and then—oh! what did anything matter? In the middle of my trouble Mr. Emptage came home one day and said his salary was cut down from three hundred a year to a hundred and fifty. They couldn't afford to keep

me any longer. So I had to look for another place. There are thousands of girls—ladies—looking for work everywhere. Oh! it is a miserable world for them. Thousands of girls—you cannot imagine, until you go about looking for work, how many there are—thousands breaking their hearts in trying to get work, and some of them starving because they cannot get any. I was one—and I had nothing left at all, and I spent two nights walking up and down the streets without a home, and on the second night I lost my only friend in the terrible fog. When you found me I had just learned that the Emptages had left Doughty Street and gone away—I knew not where. And then I think I must have broken down.”

“And then I found you. Oh! I found you.”

At this point the Sister appeared again.

“Not too much excitement, Miss Willoughby,” she said. “Hasn’t there been enough talk for to-day? Why, whatever is the matter?”

It was the young lady in fact, and not the patient, who was weeping.

“Yes, Sister—I will come again to-morrow. Enough talk for to-day. My dear, it was none other than the Hand of God Himself which led me to you that day. Oh! There are also many happy women in the world—oh! so many. See how miserable I was only a month ago, and now how happy and how grateful! The clouds will roll away from you too. I see them rolling away: there is nothing but blue sky and sunshine above, if only you could see them. Yes, Sister, I am coming. I talk too much always. I am coming. Kiss me, dear. Oh! kiss me and try to love me always, because we have had the same sorrow and may have . . . Yes, Sister, I am coming—I am coming.”



She hurried away, but Katie heard her talking and crying again outside the door. And she heard words—it was the Sister who said them—which had no meaning, so that she thought the old dreamy feeling was going to return.

“She must not be told yet: not until she is stronger. But let the poor man who wrote those letters be told at once.”

This was very remarkable. But the day was full of strange things. Presently the Secretary, who generally keeps downstairs all day and writes letters with tremendous energy, getting writer’s cramp in no time, came into the Ward and made straight for Katie’s bed and asked her if she was feeling stronger. As she asked the question her eyes filled, and she turned hastily away. Then the Sister came and placed the grapes handy for her and smoothed her pillows, and *her* eyes became humid too—fancy a hospital Sister, who sees so many sick people every day, giving way to the least resemblance of a tear! The thing was completed by the visit of the Senior Physician to the Hospital, who went her rounds in the afternoon and stood over Katie with eyes which were certainly misty.

When people are recovering from fever they are as sleepy as children and as incapable of asking questions of themselves. That is to say, they may ask those questions, but if there is no reply forthcoming they immediately cease to wonder why there is none. So that when Katie had said to herself, “What mean these phenomena?” or words to that effect, and when she received no reply she did not repeat the question, and she did not wonder in the least why there was no reply, and she fell fast asleep and slept like a young child, all round the clock, while in the beds round her some of the women tossed and turned unquiet,

and some slept like herself, and some looked, with haggard eyes, for more torture, and some silently prayed that death might come to close the record. Always, in a Hospital, there is life returning and life departing: always may be heard the long and peaceful breathing of those who sleep while health returns, and the sighs of those who listen in the hushed watches of the night for the wings of Azrael.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### The Shattering of the Castle.

**T**HE Rolfes sat at breakfast in the dining-room of their Russell Square house. That is to say, James Rolfe was taking breakfast, while his wife stood at the window looking into the garden, gloomy with its black trunks and sooty evergreens, regardless of the cold. Her face was charged with clouds which betokened thunder and lightning.

"Harriet," said her husband, turning round and looking at her, "what's the good of it? What the devil is the good of carrying on like this?"

She made no reply.

"I say, Harriet, grumpiness doesn't help. You may sulk as much as you please, but you won't send Tom back to Egypt."

"I can't bear it," she cried, starting up and walking about the room. "I won't bear it."

"What will you do then, Harriet? You might as well declare that you won't bear a toothache. Because, my dear, bad temper never yet cured a toothache or changed a man's luck."

"Oh! you deceived me—you deceived me."

"No, Harriet, no," he replied calmly. "I did not deceive you. Do sit down and have breakfast comfortably. No, my dear. Don't let us call things by bad names. I only kept back certain facts."

"You told me nothing about the trust-money."

"I did not."

"You told me nothing about the girl. The money was hers, and you knew it, and you saw she was in trouble, and you let her go without telling her. Oh! Jem, you are a villain! Something dreadful ought to happen to you."

"Don't be a fool, Harriet. Tom was dead—a dead man ought not to be permitted to rise again in this manner—not a soul knew about this Trust except myself. I am perfectly certain that nobody knew. As for the girl, she didn't know, so she expected nothing, and therefore was not disappointed nor any the worse. If I had told you, why, at the very first flare up, you would have let it all out. I know you too well, my dear: much too well."

"You deceived me—you have always deceived me," she repeated with flashing eyes and a red spot on either cheek. "But it's the last time. You shall never have the chance of deceiving me again."

"Just as you like, Harriet. How long is the present rampage going to continue?"

"You have always deceived me from the beginning. Oh! what a fool I was to trust a word you said. I might have guessed what sort of a man you were from your companions. And now you want me to help in robbing your cousin. Yes—in robbing and stealing. Oh!"

"Call it what you like, Harriet." But he reddened. "I am not going out of this job empty-handed, I promise you. Half of it ought to be

mine, by rights. And what with the jewels and the silver mugs and the wine and the pictures and my bill of costs and all"—he emphasised his conjunctions so as to impress upon himself the power of arithmetic—"I intend to come pretty well out of it, Harriet." He added a few words of more vigorous English with reference to Harriet's temper.

"Yes," she replied, "I know you will get a few hundred pounds, and you will spend it all in drink and racing and betting and billiards, and where shall we be afterwards? No, Jem, I am not going back to the old life. Don't think it. I shall go my own way."

"You always have gone your own way, Harriet. But you are a fine woman and I'm proud to own you."

"Own me?" She was not in the least mollified by the compliment to her appearance. "You own me? I will show you how much you own me."

"Proud to own you, my dear," he repeated. "A handsome creature but the deuce and all in harness. Nasty tempered, stubborn, hard in the mouth, handy with her heels, skittish, and apt to shy. They're faults, Harriet, that take the value off the most perfect animal. And now shut up and have done with it, and don't worry me any more, or I may lose my temper too; and that would be bad for you. Sit quiet: do what I tell you without calling it ugly names: and I'll pull you through."

She made some kind of inarticulate answer, and returned to the chair in the window, where she sat in silence. Her husband interpreting—poor mistaken creature!—silence for submission—who ever heard of a woman—and such a woman—submitting in silence?—chuckled, turned to the table and proceeded with his breakfast and his morning paper.

The door-bell rang loud and long. Harriet started in her chair, turned red and pale in turn, and glanced quickly at her husband. He paid no attention to a ring at the street-door—why should he?—and folded his paper so as to get at the sporting news.

But he jumped to his feet when Tom Addison appeared.

“Tom! my dear boy!” He seized Tom’s hand with effusion. “You are unexpected: but the earlier the better. You can’t come too early. Besides, this is your own house. Let me introduce you to my wife, whom you have never seen before. Strange, isn’t it, between cousins?” He was winking rapidly with both eyes. “Harriet has been longing to make your acquaintance, and to tell you of the joy and gratitude which she felt when you were reported safe. Nothing ever affected her with so much happiness.”

“That’s a falsehood, James,” said his wife quietly.

James turned pale and winked again with both eyes.

“That is my husband’s falsehood, Mr. Addison,” she repeated. “I was not glad or grateful to hear it. I was very sorry, though I did not swear about it or use the awful language that James did. We were both horribly sorry, Mr. Addison. Nobody could be more sorry and miserable than we were when the news came. It was a most dreadful blow to us. It brought back upon us the ruin which your death had averted. Don’t be deceived. I did not want to make your acquaintance at all. And you have no worse enemy in the world than my husband.”

“Go on, Harriet—go on. Make as much mischief as you can.”

“He deceived me. He told me that your death

was the luckiest thing in the world, because it gave us all the property. He never told me anything about the girl or the trust-money, because he meant to keep it all to himself."

"Oh!" Tom cried.

"Wait a bit," said his cousin. "Let her run on."

"He meant to keep it for himself, because he said that nobody knew of it but you and him, and he should be a fool to part with it. He was a thief from the day when you were killed."

"I'll be even with you for this, Harriet," her husband murmured.

"Then he found out who the real owner of that money was. Tom, it was your sweetheart—Miss Capel. He never told me that either. And when she came to his office, poor and in misery, he never told her—though he knew that all this money was hers—nor offered to help her, and let her go as she came—starving and in rags."

"What? Is this true?"

"Wait a bit," Jem replied huskily.

"Now that you have returned, he is going to pretend to find out who ought to have the money and to win your confidence by telling you."

"Harriet—you're a devil. She's put out this morning, Tom. We've had a row. She doesn't know what she is saying. As for the Trust, I told you about it long ago, and you yourself told me that Miss Capel is the heiress."

Tom turned to Harriet.

"Have you anything more to tell me? You wrote to me that if I would call this morning, your husband and you had many things of importance to communicate. As for Katie's inheritance, I know it already. Whether he knew before I told him——."

"He did know before you told him. He told me about it before you came home."



"Go on, Harriet. I suppose you will come to an end some time," said her husband sitting down. "I shan't interrupt you any more."

Harriet went out of the room and returned with a bag, which she placed upon the table.

"There are your aunt's jewels, Mr. Addison. My husband made me pack them up in a bag. He was going to take them away and sell them. He said that you would never miss them, and that they were worth a pile of money."

Her husband said nothing, but drummed upon the table with his nails.

"He has taken down half the pictures in the house and is going to cart them away. He says you won't miss them. You will find them stacked all ready in the hall."

"Go on," said Tom. "Is there any more?"

Harriet opened the doors of the sideboard, which was an old-fashioned thing with a cupboard in the middle. It was full of Uncle Joseph's old silver—his collection of mugs and cups, spoons, bowls, and ladles—a collection worth any amount of money.

"He has put all the old silver here ready to be taken away. He was going to take it away this evening in a cab."

Tom groaned. "Is there much more?"

"No. There is your uncle's wine-cellar. We've been drinking the wine ever since we came, and he means to carry away all the rest. He says you will never know that there was a cellar full, and he will either drink it himself or sell it."

"Go on, my angel," said her husband.

"There is nothing more to tell Mr. Addison. Now you know what kind of cousin you've got. Let him deny it who can."

"Why do you tell me all this?" asked Tom.

"Because she's had a quarrel with her husband,"

said Jem who, as the lady's husband, ought to have known. "When she's in a rage, she says anything."

"I tell you all this partly to punish him for his deceptions, and because I am not going to prison for his sake, and because I am not going back to the old life. He deceived me when he took me from my stall and swore he was a rich man: he had no money left; and though he had an office, there was no business: he deceived me again about this money: and at last, he wants me to join him in stealing and robbing. And that completes the job. I am going to leave him, Mr. Addison. I shall put on my bonnet and go away at once. James," she said with a hard laugh, "I have saved you from a crime. You ought to be thankful to me some day. Besides, you have got rid of me. Why, if you had not taken me from my stall on pretence of being a rich man, you might have been spared all this temptation. Mr. Addison, I have told you the truth and the exact truth. I am truly sorry that the young lady has been kept out of her rights, and I am, oh! ever so sorry you ever came home again, and I don't pretend to be glad. What a dreadful thing it would be for the world if many dead men became alive again! When James has got plenty of money and isn't worried he doesn't get drunk, and he stays at home and lays himself out to be a good husband and to please his wife. When he's got no money he is tempted to do wicked things and carries on shameful. That's the chief reason why I am sorry you are alive. Now I've told you, I will leave you to settle with him by yourself."

She turned to her husband as if loth to leave him and yet resolved.

"Find another wife, Jem," she said. "You can always catch a shop-girl by pretending to be rich."

Her husband growled.

"Good-bye then, Jem," she said. "You will now have nobody to keep but yourself unless you find a wife. Living alone ought not to cost much, I should think. Perhaps you will be able to keep honest."

He winked hard and made as if he would speak. But no words came. Then she left the room with a little bow to Tom, and as much dignity as she could assume. The two men were left alone.

It was an embarrassing situation. These two men had met as friends a quarter of an hour before: one of them firmly trusted the other. And now . . .

"Harriet has made up a very fine collection of lies," said Jem with a whole series of tight winks, and an attempt at a light and cheery manner. "When she's in a wax there's nowhere a finer stringer of big ones"—he glanced furtively at his cousin who stood meditating, his hand on the bag containing the jewels. "Now I assure you I had no more notion of what she was going to make up this time than you yourself. Ran them off fine and fluent, didn't she? In half-an-hour's time she will be crying on my neck. Poor Harriet! It is her infirmity. Poor Harriet! And as for these lies, the less we discuss them the better. They're too absurd to be mischievous."

"How came the jewels in the bag?"

"She put 'em there herself. I know nothing about them."

"How did she get the key of the safe?"

"I gave it her. Why, when you were dead, I thought the jewels and everything else were mine. I gave her the jewels for herself. She only put them into the bag to make up a story."

"Yet you promised—you promised solemnly—

that if anything remained over after the trust-money was paid you would give it to Katie."

"That was when we thought there would be barely enough in that Trust. You could not expect——"

"Go on."

"Well—I gave her the key of the safe where the jewels were lying. That is all I have to explain."

"Then there is the old silver. I suppose you know that my uncle's collection of silver is worth a great deal."

"I gave it all to my wife as well. I didn't want old silver. Women like those things. I gave it all to her—not to sell, of course. She wouldn't have sold it. What does she do? Pack it up in this sideboard and pretend I put it there."

"Then there are the pictures. I noticed a whole stack of them in the Hall."

"I suppose she put them there herself. By the Lord! Tom, it's as neat a put up thing as I ever saw."

"As for the wine now——"

"Oh! as for the wine, I drank it regularly till you came home. Why not?"

"Jem—there's some law about inheritance. Were you entitled to all these things? I have other cousins, you know, by my mother's side. They are in New Zealand to be sure, but still——"

"Well,"—Jem looked embarrassed and he winked hard—"I can make all that clear to you. But it's a long story. I can't explain the law of inheritance in five minutes. When we have a quiet quarter of an hour together——"

"Ye—yes," said Tom. "Your wife's revelations have made me see things more clearly. My return must have disgusted you more than enough, and

I ought to have understood it. I forgot that altogether. Well: you had better, I think, let me take possession at once of my own house, if it is mine—or temporary care of it, if it is not mine, with these valuable things. Please make out a statement of the whole Estate with its liabilities by—say—by to-morrow. Can you do that? Shall I send in accountants to help you?"

"I must say," Jem began, "that your suspicions——"

"I do not allow myself to have any suspicions. As for most of what your wife alleged, I shall never make any further enquiries. But until I hear from—from Katie's own lips—if ever we find her—the truth about her interview with you—whether she revealed her destitute condition to you or not—I can have no dealings with you."

"I suppose," said Jem, "that I may make out my bill of costs."

"Certainly. Oh! Jem, if you had acted well by that poor girl—if you had behaved with common honesty and truth—there is nothing in the house that you might not have taken. Nothing of mine that you could not have had. Man! I would have made you rejoice and thank God that I returned."

By this unfortunate and unexpected accident were Jem's hopes of getting something solid out of his uncle's estate wholly blasted. Who could have believed that Harriet would have rounded on him in such a way?

There is only one more chapter of this history to be written. And that is a short chapter. Let me therefore explain that Jem's after-conduct with regard to Uncle Joseph's estate was perfectly fair and upright. He sent in, the next day, a statement of the estate and the various securities, houses and lands, belonging to it. He also sent

in his bill of costs, which was naturally heavy, not to say outrageous, and he wrote a letter couched in most dignified language, stating that after what had passed he should be pleased to be relieved of his functions in administering the property without the least delay.

This done, and having received a reply, and a cheque for the bill of costs, untaxed, he sent the whole of the papers to his cousin's new advisers, cashed the cheque, called a cab, and drove away.

He never came back. The two old clerks went on dozing and meditating: the boy slumbered and read penny novels and played at astragals in the office below, until Saturday, and then—there was no money, and no one to ask for it. They waited another week. The master came no more. And then they understood that their engagement had come to an end. The boy was the most grieved of the three because, to him, the disaster meant that he would now have to find a place where he must work in earnest. The two old men, who had done their life's work, also looked for other places but failed to get an engagement elsewhere. One of them had saved money and he proceeded to buy himself an annuity, and is a most respectable old gentleman with strong opinions in politics. The other, who had saved none, went into the Marylebone Workhouse, and is now one of those useful collegians who learn the rules by heart, and insist upon their being carried out to the letter, and complain to the Guardians continually.

Tom met his cousin a few months afterwards. He looked less like a serious solicitor than ever. Tom bore no malice—being now restored to happiness—and shook hands with him in cousinly fashion.

“And how are you doing?” he asked. “Getting on with your profession?”



"No. I say, Tom, what that she-devil said was all true. I meant to have stuck to all the money when you were dead. You ought not to have come back. You were dead. You had had your funeral, so to speak—what would happen if dead men kept on coming back and upsetting things? When you came back, I saw that I should get nothing unless I helped myself. But I did hope that you would find the girl and that we should arrange everything friendly."

"I see," said Tom. "Well—it was ordered otherwise, as they say. And how is your wife?"

"She is singing at a Liverpool Music Hall. She went her way and I went mine. A fine woman, Tom, with a temper. I believe that Baronet fellow, Surennery, as they call him, put her on to it."

"What is your way, Jem?"

Jem winked both eyes and laughed.

"I am now a tipster, Tom. I send the name of the winner, you know—and the mugs send up their half-crowns by the dozen. Juggins, thank goodness, is everywhere. Oh! I'm doing pretty well. As for the Law, I always hated it. You're looking well and hearty, Tom. Good-bye—good-bye!"

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## CHAPTER THE LAST.

### Life and Love.

EVERYBODY at the Hospital continued to show the most extraordinary interest and sympathy with Katie during her short convalescence. The Senior Physician spoke mysteriously of Joy as a great assistance in cases where the patient had been brought low

by trouble: she also said that freedom from anxiety would be found an invaluable medicine: and that rest from every kind of work, with perhaps travel amid new scenes, would complete her cure. She said these ridiculous things just as if rest and ease and travel were attainable and within the reach of the poorest girl in all London. Then the Sister, a most sober-minded and practical person, free from all enthusiasms, agreed with the Senior Physician and said that she was always right, as her patient would find. Then the Secretary used to sit by her bedside and whisper that, after all, there was no cure so good as Happiness. And so with everybody. The other patients were all in the same tale, and would tell her that she was a happy girl and no one envied her, because she deserved all. Why, even when visitors came to see the other patients there used to be a great whispering, and the visitors would look at her curiously. Because, you see, by this time, all the world knew the story that I have written down and there had been leading articles on Well-known and Historical Reappearances, in which the Claimant always furnished one illustration and a certain Demetrius another, and Enoch Arden, Perkin Warbeck, Lambert Simnel, and one Martin never failed to lend their names.

Katie mended fast—and one afternoon her friend Miss Willoughby told her that the time had now come when she could leave the Hospital.

"And now, my dear," she said, "you are to have a surprise. Oh! what a lot of things I have to tell you! I heard yesterday what the Doctor—oh! she is a wise woman!—said about Joy. Yes, Joy is a beautiful medicine. Thank GOD, I know it in my own case. Now there is no luggage to pack up, is there?"

"I am the only girl in the world," said Katie—

"the only girl, I believe, who has got no luggage, no possessions, no money, no friends, and no relations."

"Yes: which will make all that follows the more delightful. You may add, my dear, that you have got no clothes."

"No clothes?"

"Why—you could not possibly go to the House of Joy in such poor shabby things as you had on when we brought you here."

"But I am in mourning, you know——"

"My dear,"—she kissed her—"nobody knows it better than I do. Sometimes, however, we put off mourning—on joyful occasions—say, for weddings. It is my fancy, dear, that you put off mourning for this day. To-morrow—if you like—you may put it on again."

Her new clothes were fitting for a young lady, being, in fact, much finer than anything the poor girl had ever worn in her life before, but Katie put them on without a word.

"Where have you brought me?" Katie looked about the room. They had come in a cab: it was five o'clock: outside it was dark already: they were in a room beautifully furnished with all sorts of pretty things in it: the lamp was lit and on the table tea was standing in readiness.

"My dear, you must not ask too many questions, because I have got such a lot to tell you. Oh! how shall I ever begin? First, you shall have a cup of tea—and so will I—nothing in the world like a cup of tea. Formerly ladies drank small beer. Think of that! Is it sweet enough, dear? Oh! Katie—I am so happy to-night." She stopped in her talk to kiss her. "This is my own room—is it not a pretty room? And now I am going to give it up to my sister, because I am

going to be married—you know that, don't you? My lover who was dead has come back to life again, and nothing will please him—the foolish boy!—but that I must marry him at once. Oh! if your lover could come back too! And I shall never have such a pretty room as this again, I am sure. But I shall have him instead. He was in Egypt, you know, like your boy—Tom—poor Tom Addison. My boy knew Tom Addison very well. He will talk to you about him if you like.” She stopped and kissed her again, and again the tears came into her eyes.

“Well, it was all in the papers, and I daresay you saw it. There was an expedition made, an attack and the Egyptians ran away, and my boy was reported missing—just like yours. Yes, dear, we were sisters in misfortune—and we did not know it—that day when you fell fainting into my arms and told me you were without friends and without relatives, and I was your cousin all the time.”

“Are you really my cousin?”

“That is one of the things I am going to explain to you, dear Katie. Oh! if Tom Addison had only come home with Harry McLauchlin.”

“McLauchlin! That is the name of the officer who was missing at the same time.”

“Yes—he was only a prisoner and he escaped. If Tom had only escaped with him! Poor Katie! we lost our lovers together. Oh! if we could find them together!”

She stopped and listened. Outside there were voices.

She ran out of the room and Katie heard her saying, earnestly: “Not yet—oh! not yet—I implore you—not yet—wait till I call you.” Then she returned and shut the door carefully. “Oh! I have such a lot to tell you. First of all, dear,

you are my cousin. Do you see this portrait?" It was a miniature representing an old lady, sweet of face and beautiful. "That is your great-aunt—and mine—Katharine Regina Willoughby. Your name is the same and so is mine."

"But my name is Capel."

"Nothing of the kind, my dear. Your father called himself Capel because he quarrelled with his relations—and—and refused to speak to them any more, you know." This was a kind way of putting it, and the male members of the family reversed this statement.

"But his real name was Willoughby. Here is a portrait of him in uniform when he was in the army—there it is." She brought a water-colour portrait showing a very gallant young hero in scarlet. 'Tis a colour which sets off the fire and masterfulness of the hero in his youth.

"Oh! it is my father," cried Katie, "though I cannot remember him so young as this. But he kept his good looks to the last."

"Yes—it is your father. It is all proved now without the least doubt, Katie." She lowered her voice as one does when one is going to say a disagreeable thing. "We will not talk much about him because he—he had his faults, I am afraid. But you should keep this likeness. He was Miss Willoughby's favourite nephew: she gave him quantities of money: she forgave him all extravagances: she even placed a large sum in the hands of Mr. Joseph Addison, her solicitor, so that he might enjoy an annuity of £300 a year, which was paid him regularly."

"Oh! In Mr. Addison's hands? Tom's Uncle Joseph?"

"Yes—after his death the principal was to be given to her niece—to you, my dear."

"To me?"



"Yes, to you. That Trust, the discovery of which sent Tom to Egypt, was yours, Katie. Oh! if you had only known it! And I am very much afraid that Mr. Rolfe, who seems to have been a person of no morals at all, was actually going to cheat you out of it. It is all yours, Katie: you are—not rich perhaps—but you have plenty. My dear, if Tom had only escaped with Harry!"

"Oh! but how did you find out all this? Is it really true?"

"You have lots of friends, Katie—quantities of friends. There are both friends and relations waiting for you. To think that I did not know, and took you to the Co-operative Work Girls! But never mind. And now I am going to bring in some of your friends." She rang the bell, and the door was opened with a promptitude which proved that the man—it was a man—must have been lurking outside in readiness."

"Katie," said the other Katie, "this is Harry McLauchlin—my Harry—who was in captivity among the Arabs for six months with your Tom. Harry made his escape, you know. If Tom could only have escaped with him!"

The escaped prisoner, who showed no traces of his long captivity, bowed and took her hand, but said nothing and looked embarrassed.

"It is like a dream to me," said Katie, "I cannot understand. You were a prisoner with Tom—you were present when he—was killed?"

"Harry will tell you all if you please to ask him to-morrow; not to-day, dear. He will tell you how it fared with them in their long captivity. But perhaps you will hear from another source."

"Miss Willoughby," said Captain McLauchlin,



recovering from his confusion, "we found out—Tom and I—in the talks which we had at night all about each other. We guessed that you could be none other than the daughter of Harry Willoughby."

"Did Tom send me no message when you escaped? None at all?"

"None," said the Captain.

"Captain McLaughlin, tell me"—she caught his hand—"oh! tell me, once for all, how he died?"

"Not now—not now. Ask me, if you like, to-morrow."

"Did he suffer? Was he murdered while he tried to escape with you?"

"He was not murdered, but he suffered—well, he suffered about as much as I did. We had a bad time of it, Miss Willoughby. He helped me to bear it."

"Ask him no more questions, dear," said her cousin. "To-morrow, as many as you please. There is another friend who wants to see you."

The Captain stepped aside and the other friend came in.

It was Mrs. Emptage—and how she carried on, with what tears and congratulations—yet she would not explain the thing that made her so glad: and how she lamented the fallen family fortunes and the interrupted education of her daughters on the one hand, and how she rejoiced over Katie's happiness and good fortune on the other, cannot be expressed. She spoke of her happiness as of a thing which left nothing at all to be desired.

"I am happy," said Katie, gently wondering, "because I have found kindness and friends. But—oh! Mrs. Emptage—I have lost Tom."

Mrs. Emptage nodded and laughed, and nodded again in a bewildering manner. Then she stood aside. It seemed as if everything was arranged beforehand and as if everybody knew his part.

The next visitor was no other than Miss Beatrice Aspey. She came dressed in her poor old black stuff frock. Nobody could be shabbier. The sight of her recalled the days of anxiety and the circle of poor and struggling gentlewomen and the voice of the Consoler. Katie sprang up to meet her.

"My dear," said Miss Beatrice—if she was shabby, no one could be sweeter, gentler, or more consoling—"did I not say that in the darkest moment and the most unexpected manner, God Himself opens a way? I have learned all—I know more than you—yes—out of your sufferings you will learn a thousand lessons of charity and love for others. You are rich, my dear, I hear, and happy. Do not forget us. You will find changes. Miss Stidolph has gone to the workhouse. I go to see her sometimes. And Miss Grant, who worked so hard every night, is dead. She had been married, my dear, and nobody knew it, to a wretched man, and she had a boy for whom she worked so hard. Others have gone and new ones come. We are all as poor and we are all as struggling. Do not forget the poor gentlewomen—oh! the poor gentlewomen—who have no friends but their Lord in Heaven!"

"How could I ever forget them? But oh! Miss Beatrice, where is Lily?"

Miss Beatrice dropped her eyes.

"I do not know—we have heard something, it is true. But I do not know, indeed, where to look for her—or what she is doing. My dear, you must be very humble and thank God for things of which

you know not, as well as for things of which you know."

So they kissed and she too stood aside. There are not many ladies left who still keep to the old faith and use the old language, and fear nothing because they live in a sure and certain hope.

Then there appeared—none other than Dittmer Bock.

At the sight of Katie he burst into unfeigned weeping and sobbing, and fell on his knees.

"Ach! Himmel!" he cried. "It was my fault. I ought never to have left you alone. I was a Dumm Kopf. I lost my way in the fog. And it was midnight when I got back to the Park, and you were gone—you were gone. Kätchen, can you forgive me? All your sufferings were my fault—mine. But they are all over now that——" he stopped and choked.

She gave him her hand, which he kissed and got up still penitent.

"You did your best, Dittmer. Do not reproach yourself. Can I ever forget that you were the only friend we had in the world—Lily and I—before we all lost each other. Where is Lily?"

Dittmer stammered. "I—I—I—do not know," he said, "I seek her still."

"We *must* find her, Dittmer. Do not let us lose sight of each other again. You must have so much to tell me after all these weeks."

"Ach! I must no more call you Kätchen but Fraülein Willoughby—and you will no more listen to me, because——" he stopped and looked confused. "But you will be happy. What matter if all the world were bankrupt so that you are happy? It is true that my salary which was forty pounds a year is now sixty: I should have had thirty pounds a year to help you with, because I could live easily on thirty pounds a year." He

sighed as if he had lost a beautiful chance. "I must not grumble. Your happiness is worth more than thirty pounds a year. It is true also that I have nearly completed a project which would give, I am sure, another Godefroi to Hamburg if I could be helped by your sympathy."

"You will always have that, Dittmer."

"No: you can no longer listen to my plans. What are ambitions without a sympathetic friend?"

"Why not, Dittmer? Did we not agree that I was always to be your sister? What has happened to destroy that agreement?"

"You are rich: you have many friends: you will have also——" he stopped because the other Miss Willoughby shook her finger. "Ya—I gombrehend. I say nichts. I search for my island in the Pacific Ocean, like Herr Godefroi."

"Herr Bock!"—it was the other Katie—"you can have no more time. Now go—all of you—because there is still one other friend. . . ."

"My dear," she said, when they were alone, "does joy kill? Are you strong enough to bear the greatest surprise of all? Everything has been restored to you. Your name, which your father concealed: your fortune, which a dishonest lawyer wished to rob: and—and—oh! Katie—we are happy together. Heaven gave you to me on the day when my love came back to life—I give you back to Tom—not killed, but escaped—and at home again and well—waiting for you—waiting for you, my dear. . . ."

One shall be taken and another left. Where is the woman who was left? Alas! they have not yet found her, though Dittmer seeks her continually. Perhaps in the future, far or near, the happy woman who was taken may be permitted

to bring the solace of love that endureth beyond shame unto the hapless woman who was left. So mote it be !

They were married from Harley House, so that the girls who have to seek continually for work and have never any joy in their lives, or rest, or love, and never get enough of anything, have now something sweet and pleasant to remember and to tell. Once, the story now goes, there was a girl in Harley House—actually in Harley House, where no male visitors are allowed on any pretence and all the girls go loverless—who had a lover of her own. But he was killed. Then she lost her work and could find no more, and became so poor that she had to leave even Harley House, where one can live so cheaply—actually, she could not find the money for Harley House—and went forth to wander penniless, and she met with many remarkable adventures and nearly perished of want and cold. But lo ! Her lover was not dead after all, and he came back and found her, after many days, and they were married from Harley House by express permission of the Committee, and they now live together happy for ever and for ever in this world and the next. There is no other Institution or Home or Asylum or Retreat or Hostel for young gentlewomen who maintain themselves by art, literature, music, teaching, copying, or keeping books, in which there exists so bright and beautiful a memory. It lights up all the House. The residents tell new comers about it, just as the nuns of Whitby Abbey used to exult over the story of St. Hilda and her miracles. The history gives them hope: Katie is an Exemplar: what has happened to her may happen in like manner to themselves. Very likely it will, because they are invited to the house in Russell Square which

this happy pair have now converted into a Garden of Eden—but there are no apple-trees in the Square Garden. There they meet young men who have the true feeling for the sex, and call that man churl and niggerling and pitiful sneak and cur, who would suffer any young woman whom he loves to work if he could order otherwise. All women who have to work for their bread confess and declare that the chief happiness, the joy, the crown of love, is to sit down and let a man work for them and pour into their ample laps the harvest of his labour—the fruit and corn and wine; the golden guineas; the name and fame—oh! ye Gods! the name and fame!—to administrate and receive and distribute and provide. Merciful Heaven! Send quickly to Harley House, in spite of the rules, as many strong-armed lads as there are lasses fit for them, so that every poor young gentlewoman may find a man who will believe her beautiful and best and will worship her, and set her in a chair with the household linen in her lap and a few friends by her side for afternoon tea, while, out of doors, he cheerfully mops his streaming brow and makes the splinters fly!

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